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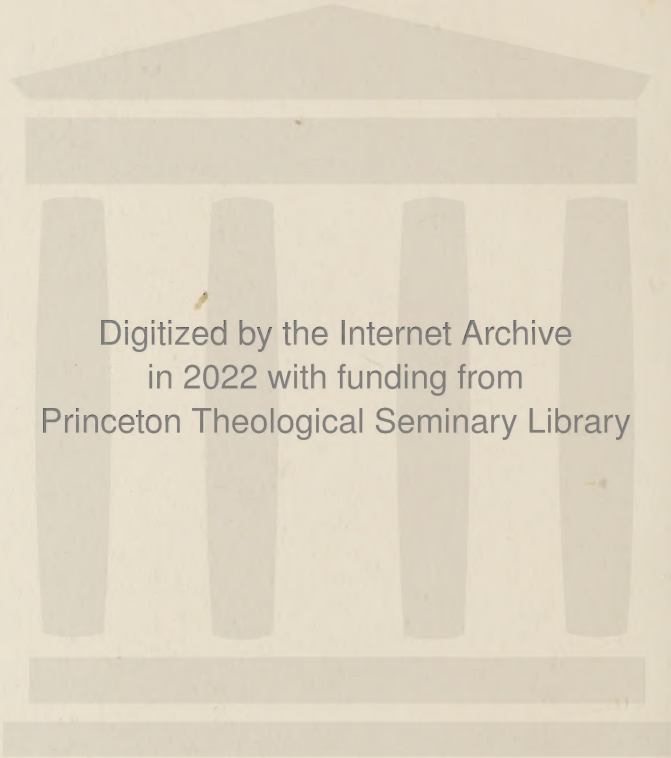
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MAN'S PARTNERSHIP WITH DIVINE PROVIDENCE

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MAN'S PARTNERSHIP WITH DIVINE PROVIDENCE

BY

JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

'God's providence is mine inheritance'

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TO

JAMES HARRISON RIGG, D.D.

WITH

GROWING ESTEEM AND

AFFECTION

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Divine Providence	3
II.	Human Providence	17
III.	The Bible as a Book of Providence	27
IV.	Providence in other Religions	53
V.	The God of Providence	83
VI.	The Man of Providence	103
VII.	Nature as a Book of Providence	129
VIII.	Providence in the Life of Nations	151
IX.	Providence in Church History	187
X.	Providence in Missionary Service	213
XI.	Personal Experience as a Book of Providence	245
XII.	Remarkable Providences	261
XIII.	Providential Methods	277
XIV.	Providence and its Critics	299
XV.	The Part assigned to Human Providence	321
	Index	343

I

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

While creatures are ministering unto Him, the Highest Creator sitteth upon His high seat, whence He wieldeth all things with His guiding reins. 'Tis no marvel, for He is King, and Master, and Wellspring, and Beginning, and Law, and Wisdom, and Righteous Judge. He sendeth all creatures on His errands, and biddeth them all return. If the one unchanging King had not established all things created, they would all have fallen and burst asunder and come to naught. Nevertheless they have one thing in common—their single love in the serving of such a Master; and they rejoice that He ruleth them. No wonder is it, for they could not be at all, did they not serve their Maker.—KING ALFRED'S version of the *Consolations of Boethius*, Chap. xxxix.

And indeed it were not worth while to live in a world devoid of God and Providence.—FLAVEL.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Belief in Divine Providence	3
The Book of Divine Providence	4
Milton's fear of misinterpreting Providence	5
Faith of Wesley and Browning in Providence	6
The word 'providence' in Bible, Apocrypha, and Rheims New Testament	7
Two definitions—Hegel and Dr. W. B. Pope	8
Is there any Providence over human affairs?	9
Caution in stating the doctrine	10
Inspirations of the belief in Providence	11
St. Augustine on Universal Providence	12
The Temple of Providence	14

LITERATURE

NOTE.—*The references given in the chapters will guide the student to the sections he needs in any of the authorities named. For the use of some of these volumes and for much wise suggestion, I am indebted to my friend the Rev. William Unsworth.*

The articles on Providence in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* and *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels;* Dr. A. B. Bruce, *The Providential Order* (Gifford Lectures, 1897); Pope, *Compendium of Theology* and *Higher Catechism of Theology;* Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine;* Schmid, *Scientific Creed of a Theologian*; Watson, *Philosophical Basis of Religion.*

I

A BELIEF in Divine Providence lies at the root of all religion. Even its crudest expression in the superstition of savage tribes recognizes some superior power which controls human destiny. The nobler and truer religion becomes, the more prominence does it give to the providence of God. Christian men believe in a wise and gracious government of the world. They are not blind to the difficulties which surround a subject so vast and so complex as that of God's provision and oversight for every living thing. Christian thinkers naturally expect to meet many mysteries as they attempt to trace the working of Divine Providence. Its methods and plans must often of necessity be far above human sight. We dare not hope to grasp their meaning fully or in a moment. They may be expected to unfold slowly and by successive stages. Explanations may often be withheld, or may only gradually be made clear. Yet these difficulties do not destroy faith in Divine Providence. They often test it sorely; but if it is rooted in strong conviction of God's power and goodness, the belief will emerge from these tests with new force and compass, as Archbishop

Leighton said of grace when plunged in the waters of adversity: 'It rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed.'[1]

The problems that await us in such a study as this grow more complex and more enthralling as the world advances in knowledge and in its grasp of its complex resources. Much light has been thrown upon the subject since Wesley's day, yet his words are still true—

> There is scarce any doctrine in the whole compass of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this. And, at the same time, there is scarce any that is so little regarded, and perhaps so little understood.[2]

The Book of Divine Providence is bigger than the Bible. It covers the course of universal history, it includes the story of all nations and all lives. It deals with the creation of the earth, it traces its progress and development from generation to generation. The subject first wove its spell around the writer when he reached that memorable question in the Methodist Catechism: 'What is God's providence?' and learnt the answer: 'His most holy, wise, and powerful preservation and government of all His creatures, and all their actions.'

Ps. ciii. 19.—His kingdom ruleth over all.
Matt. x. 30.—The very hairs of your head are all numbered.
1 Tim. vi. 15.—King of kings, and Lord of lords.
Ps. lxxvi. 10.—Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.

[1] *On* 1 *Peter i.* 7. [2] *Works*, vi. p. 315.

That answer, with the lovely string of texts, each a gleam into the great realm of Divine Providence, left its stamp on a boy's mind, and was one of the truths that he carried from his Sunday school as a lamp for his feet in coming years.

The study of God's providence, which these pages attempt, is not a task to be undertaken lightly. There is grave danger of misinterpreting God. Milton realized the peril when those undarkened eyes of his soul were turned on this world of mysteries. The grandeur and the difficulty of his theme drew from the Puritan poet his memorable prayer to the Divine Spirit:—

> What in me is dark
> Illumine, what is low raise and support;
> That to the highth of this great argument
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.[1]

Milton's reverence and humility well befit any one who ventures to tread in his steps. Yet it is worth while to attempt this task. We believe in God's providence. That faith has endured many a mighty shock, but it is itself unshaken. The belief has changed its form in various ways as science and experience have interpreted nature and human history; but the Church of Christ has not outgrown the Sermon on the Mount nor lost that vision of the Heavenly Father who knows and loves and succours the creatures whom His hands have made. John Wesley, in a letter to his

[1] *Paradise Lost*, i. 22–6.

friend Ebenezer Blackwell dated 1755, condensed that faith in Providence into a glorious sentence which reveals the secret of his patient strength and daily sunshine: 'I see God sitting on His throne, and ruling all things well.'[1] The words were a memorable anticipation of the song which Browning puts in the mouth of 'that little ragged girl.'

> The year's at the spring
> And day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hillside's dew-pearled;
> The lark's on the wing;
> The snail's on the thorn:
> God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world![2]

Two great spirits thus meet across the intervening century with their confession of faith in Divine Providence. No greater service can be done to our feverish and troubled age than to induce it to study the book of Providence. It is always challenging attention from those who have eyes to see.

> Providence is no doubt a lesson-book, spread out before us that we may read it. Yet it is a difficult and mysterious book. . . . Most assuredly, the volume of Providence is as much more difficult of interpretation than the volume of the Word, as hieroglyphical writing is than alphabetical.[3]

Yet despite the mysteries, those who share St. Paul's confidence, 'We know that all things work together

[1] *Works*, xii. 183.
[2] *Pippa Passes*, Part I.
[3] M'Cosh, *The Method of the Divine Government*, p. 189.

for good to them that love God,' will have no fear as to the result of humble and prayerful investigation. It must assuredly end in fresh confidence and richer praise.

The word 'Providence'—Greek *πρόνοια*, Vulgate *providentia*—is only found once in the English Bible. Tertullus, the orator who accuses Paul in the court of Felix, pays memorable tribute to that Roman governor: 'Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation, we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness' (Acts xxiv. 2, 3). The Greek Testament has the word also in Rom. xiii. 14: 'Make not provision (*πρόνοιαν*) for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' It is used in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (xiv. 2–5) to describe the care of God over the mariner who ventures to sea in his vessel: 'For verily desire of gain deviseth that, and the workman built it by his skill. But Thy providence, O Father, governeth it: for Thou hast made a way in the sea, and a safe path in the waves; shewing that Thou canst save from all danger: yea, though a man went to sea without art. Nevertheless thou wouldest not that the works of Thy wisdom should be idle, and therefore do men commit their lives to a small piece of wood, and, passing the rough sea in a weak vessel, are saved.' Again in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, xvii. 2, we read: 'For when unrighteous men thought to oppress the holy nation; they being shut up in their houses, the prisoners

of darkness, and fettered with the bonds of a long night, lay (there) exiled [fugitives] from the Eternal Providence.'

In the Rheims New Testament a marginal note is attached to Luke xii. 22: 'He forbiddeth not competent providence, but to much carefulness.'

The Rheims New Testament has also a note on Acts ii. 23, which is described in the margin as 'God's determination that Jesus should die excuseth not the Jewes.' It reads—

By the determinate counsel, &c. God delivered Him, and He delivered Himself, for love and intention of our salvation, and so the act was holy and God's owne determination. But the Jewes and others which betrayed and crucified Him, did it of malice and wicked purpose, and their facte was damnable, and not of God's counsel or causing: though He tolerated it, for that He could and did turne their abominable facte to the good of our salvation. Therefore abhorre those new Manichees of our time, both Lutherans and Calvinists, that must make God the author and cause of Judas betraying of Christ, no less than of Paules conversion. Beside the false translation of Beza, saying for God's prescience or foreknowledge (in the Greeke, πρόγνωσις) God's providence.

Hegel supplies a good working definition: 'Divine Providence is wisdom, endowed with an infinite Power, which realizes its aim, viz. the absolute rational design of the world.'[1]

Dr. W. B. Pope says that Providence 'in its widest

[1] *Philosophy of History*, p. 13.

application, signifies the Divine Presence in the world as sustaining, controlling, and guiding to their destination all things that are made. . . . It is obviously the most comprehensive term in the language of theology. There is no topic which has already been discussed, none which awaits discussion, that does not pay its tribute to Providence.'[1]

We may be met with the preliminary objection: Is there any Providence over human affairs at all? Do not the wrongs of society, the sorrows of good men, the confusion and strife which we daily witness, force us to conclude that God has withdrawn from His world and left it to the sway of inexorable laws which work out their results unrelieved by any adjustment to individual needs, or any pity for human frailty and ignorance? Leibnitz, in his historic *Theodicy*, refers to things which make some conclude that there is not any Providence to govern human affairs.

Man is exposed to a temptation to which we know that he will succumb. An infinity of frightful evils arise therefrom. By his fall all the human race will be infected and set in a kind of necessity of sinning called original sin. The world will thus be involved in a strange confusion. Death and many maladies will be introduced, with a thousand other evils and mysteries which afflict ordinarily the good and the bad. Wickedness ever reigns, and virtue is oppressed here below, and so it scarcely appears that any Providence presides over the world.[2]

[1] *Compendium of Theology*, pp. 186, 200.
[2] *Essais de Théodicée*, Première Partie, § 4.

These difficulties are always before our eyes, and the impression which they make is too profound to be either ignored or forgotten. Whilst they do not shake our conviction that the world is under the control of Providence, they warn us that the doctrine needs to be stated with extreme caution. In magnifying Divine Providence we must not lose sight of that human providence which is meant to be its ally. There are many sorrows of the world which are caused by defiance of God's providence or failure to co-operate with it. We must remember that He does not override man's action, though He overrules it in ways that often fill us with surprise. Till this partnership is recognized, we shall often be in perplexity. Sir James Stephen puts the difficulty in a letter to Dr. Whewell.

To conceive of Deity as actually present, and as acting at each instant of time, and at each point of space, so as to be the veritable conductor of all movements, from their commencement to their close—does it not involve some formidable consequences? . . . In popular discourse we call those events 'providential' which seem to us to prevent, or to cure, or to mitigate sorrow, or tend to induce some positive benefit; and the man who was prevented the other day from embarking on the ship which was wrecked off Beachy Head, called his escape 'providential.' To have spoken in that manner of the embarcation of the family who were drowned in her, would have shocked a common feeling or prejudice.[1]

That letter reminds us that no human wisdom can

[1] *Letters*, p. 195, November 1, 1853.

unravel the mystery of each separate dispensation of Providence, and bids us wait for the final explanation. Meanwhile Providence may fulfil its purpose for some by lengthening out life and for others by allowing natural law to take its course. The result in these cases may alike be for God's glory and the good of others. A survey of human affairs reveals the presence of a guiding hand and will. Whatever perplexities may face us in the consideration of individual cases, we cannot doubt that God rules the world. Professor Gwatkin argues—

> In one sense, no doubt, every true thought must be of divine suggestion ; for if there is a God not lower than the beasts, we need no Gospel to tell us that there is such a thing as Providence,—which in this case means that the order of things has been so arranged and guided as to suggest such true thought.[1]

God's providence may thus be regarded as a glorious fact, which inspires those who trust in it with courage to face all tasks that life may set them. It is our heavenly Father's foreseeing and gracious rule over His world. There is no realm of nature over which Divine Providence does not hold sway. The history of nations and churches, as well as the life of families and individuals, is shaped and controlled by this care of God. The great and the lowly, the just and the unjust, are all under His sway.

When we speak of the providence of God we mean that in all the events of life, individual and national, God has a

[1] *The Knowledge of God*, i. 165–7.

part and a share. He is not absent; He does not look down upon the world from a distance, never approaching it. Holding 'second causes' in His hands, He works with them and through them in a way which leads us to say, God is here, and He is working. That is Providence.[1]

Providence not only seeks the physical well-being of the world, but has its great moral and spiritual ends, which are never out of sight. It is an application of Christianity to the needs of man. The uplifting of nations and individuals under the mediatorial sovereignty of Christ is the goal towards which the whole scheme moves steadily on. We believe in God's gracious conduct of all human things. It was our Lord's consolation and inspiration and it is ours.

Faith in a Divine Providence, in answers to prayer, and in miracles, is indeed an inalienable factor in the Christian view of the world. . . . That God's Providence rules over the world down to its very smallest details; that in both the small and the great requirements of life God leads men like a Father, especially those who know themselves to be children of God through Christ; and that He gives them the conscious experience of this Fatherly guidance in their earthly lot,—this is a self-evident factor in the Christian view of the world. Jesus Christ, on whom this view is founded, Himself lived in this faith and proclaimed it.[2]

St. Augustine had a lofty faith in a Universal Providence. Before his conversion he had been greatly

[1] Dr. J. Elder Cumming, *The Book of Esther*, pp. 70-1.
[2] Schmid, *Scientific Creed of a Theologian*, p. 172.

attracted to Manichaeism with its conflicting forces of good and evil. Ambrose saved him from that heresy by showing him that the world and man were the free creation of God. He thus turned the mind of the future theologian in a new direction. Providence became for Augustine the ground of the order or harmony in all things. He compared the universe to a beautiful poem. God worked through His creatures while He Himself remained unchangeable.[1] Augustine's statement of the doctrine forms one of the noblest passages in the classic Apologia for Providence written two years after Alaric had sacked Rome.

The Maker and Creator of every soul, and of every body, . . . He, from whom is all being, beauty, form and order, number, weight, and measure; He from whom all nature, mean and excellent, all seeds of form, all forms of seed, all motion both of forms and seeds derive and have being; He that gave flesh the original beauty, strength, propagation, form and shape, health and symmetry; He that gave the unreasonable soul, sense, memory and appetite, the reasonable besides these, phantasy, understanding, and will: He (I say) having left neither heaven, nor earth, nor angel, nor man, no, nor the most base and contemptible creature, neither the bird's feather, nor the herb's flower, nor the tree's leaf, without the true harmony of their parts, and peaceful concord of composition; it is no way credible, that He would leave the kingdoms of men, and their bondages and freedoms, loose and uncomprised in the laws of His eternal providence.[2]

[1] Watson, *Philosophical Basis of Religion*, pp. 340-1.
[2] *De Civitate Dei*, v. 11 (translation by J. H., 1610).

Many doubts are set at rest when, like St. Augustine, we regard the world itself as a revelation of Divine Providence. York Cathedral has been described by an American visitor as 'the grandest and beautifullest in all England.' Those who have felt its spell and have traced the story of the minster which has gathered around itself the pride and love, not only of its own great county of Yorkshire, but also of the whole of England, will scarcely feel it an unworthy illustration of that great temple of Providence of which God Himself is both builder and architect. Within that glorious temple centres the life and work of man; and as we read his story in the page of history, and follow the labours of the Church of Christ in all lands, the book of Providence opens before us with divine love and wisdom shining forth from every page.

II

HUMAN PROVIDENCE

With a providence unknown in other parts of Scotland, the peasants have in most places planted orchards around their cottages. —*Old Mortality*, Chap. xi.

But if, as is the more religious theory, Providence intends not all which happens, but only what is good, then indeed man has it in his power, by his voluntary actions, to aid the intentions of Providence; but he can only learn those intentions by considering what tends to promote the general good, and not what man has a natural inclination to.—J. Stuart Mill, *Essays on Religion*, p. 55.

There are perhaps some circumstances of life in which Providence has no intention that people should be content.—Ruskin, *Unto this Last*. § 83.

For the providence of man is included under the providence of God, just as a particular cause under a universal cause.—Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. xxii.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Human Providence a modest counterpart of Divine Providence	17
The contrast humbling yet encouraging	17
God the predominant partner	19
Man must work in harmony with God	19
God's providence incarnate in man	20
Duties of Human Providence	21
Its spheres of work	22
God's instruments wear out and are laid aside	23

LITERATURE

Huntington, *Human Society: Its Providential Structure, Relations, and Offices;* Lilley, *Adventus Regni;* Lodge, *The Substance of Faith*; Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis.*

II

FROM the study of Divine Providence we pass to that humbler realm where Human Providence is at work. God's providence seems at first to dwarf that of man. It brings us into the presence of infinite resources of wisdom, power, and goodness, resources of which the display is unfettered by those limits of time and place to which man must always submit. Human Providence, when best and wisest, can only be a modest counterpart of the Divine Providence, stumbling after it in painful consciousness of its blindness and its scanty powers. It is well when it is content to play this lowly part. Men have often been found indifferent to the place they had to fill, blind to its possibilities and opportunities, or slumbering till the hour for action had gone. They have even set themselves to hinder or oppose the plans of Divine Providence. Gamaliel was alive to this peril when he uttered his memorable warning to the Sanhedrin: 'Lest haply ye be found even to fight against God' (Acts v. 39).

Yet if the contrast between Divine and Human Providence is humbling, there are considerations which

change that feeling to one of hope and courage. Here is a province which we need not despair of shaping and controlling. Man's position must always be subordinate. He can reach no higher glory, no nobler sphere, than to be a scholar and an ally of Divine Providence. If he works in obedience to the higher power, divine resources will always be behind him. The weakness of the human instrument will but serve to bring out the riches of God's grace and wisdom. He can thus do His best work. 'God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that He might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God' (1 Cor. i. 27–9).

The accusations brought against Divine Providence often resolve themselves into failures of its human partners, who have not been alert to embrace the opportunity of escaping disaster or prompt to seize the openings that would have led to success. Many questions here suggest themselves. How far does Divine Providence overrule the mistakes of its human ally; in what cases will it override man's opposition; to what extent will it educate and guide him to better and wiser methods? These are problems of Providence which we shall have to face at a later stage of the inquiry.

In the scheme of Providence God is the predominant partner. That position we dare not and would not dispute. Man's power to further the ends for which his service is enlisted will increase in proportion as he recognizes this fact and frames his conduct in harmony with it. His wisdom lies in obeying, and imitating the methods of Divine Providence.

Our Lord closed His revelation of God's Providence: 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' with a call on all His disciples to frame their lives and tempers on the divine model: 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt. v. 45, 48).

The purposes of Providence cannot be fully answered in the spirit of this supreme command till the divine and the human partners work together in perfect harmony. Towards this end, difficult though it confessedly is, there are manifold helps. First and mightiest is the grace of the Divine Spirit, who guides and leads all the sons of God. Nature is also a teacher who trains man to fulfil his part in the scheme of Providence. She sets barriers of failure and punishment to turn him from the road which he must not take. She gives success and pleasure as he chooses the right path. Nature thus educates man in a thousand ways, and sustains him in his effort to further the plans of God.

There is a continual spur to exertion in this

enlarged view of the co-operation between the divine and human partners in realizing the gradually unfolding programme in which we all have to play our part. A suggestive writer thus deals with this subject—

> We think of the providence of God as something outside us. Perhaps we cannot help thinking of it so, for most certainly it exists and acts far beyond the limits of our possible activity or of what is possible for us to imagine. But at least it is fruitless, more, it is a blasphemy, for us to fold our hands in a lazy reliance upon that providence. So far as we are concerned, God's providence can only be fruitfully realized in proportion as it is incarnate in us. Then alone, at least, have we the right to reach out in a great hope and faith to the wider action of His universal care. There is no greater instance of religious delusion and self-deceit than a belief in the providence of God apart from co-operation with it.[1]

Our perversions of the doctrine come from false conceptions 'of God's providence. We think of it as a kind of unregulated thaumaturgy, a mere wonder-working, a mere manipulation of matter by a force we cannot understand. When anything becomes intelligible we withdraw it from the domain of God's action. Surely it is time for us to have done with this notion of a magical Providence, of a Providence which reveals nothing but capricious power. It is only as the conscious agents of God's providence that we can gradually, and always in such limited fashion, enter into the secret of His larger providence in the world.'[2]

[1] *Adventus Regni*, by A. L. Lilley, p. 87. [2] Ibid., p. 89.

It has taken many generations to reveal to the Church the greatness of its rôle as the ally of Divine Providence. The most sagacious and enlightened Christian men are only beginning to realize how vast and far-reaching are the opportunities opening before them. The field for service is indeed boundless. Bishop Gore regards it as a distinctive merit of Sir Oliver Lodge's *Catechism* that so much stress is laid upon the responsibilities which rest on man as the administrator of the divine order.[1] His duty is 'to assist his fellows, to develop his own higher self, to strive towards good in every way open to his powers, and generally to seek to know the laws of Nature and to obey the will of God; in whose service alone can be found that harmonious exercise of the faculties which is identical with perfect freedom.'

The kingdom of heaven is the central feature of practical Christianity.

> Our whole effort should, directly or indirectly, make ready its way—in our hearts, in our lives, and in the lives of others. It is the ideal state of society towards which reformers are striving; it is the ideal of conscious existence towards which saints aim.[2]

The limitless horizon thus opened up must not lead us to overlook our individual sphere, which is really glorified as a vital part of the universal scheme. Every home is a little world where Divine and Human

[1] *Guardian*, March 23, 1907, p. 528.
[2] *Catechism*, Questions 4, 20.

Providence must labour hand-in-hand to secure those results which enrich both earth and heaven. No one can measure the opportunity for fidelity here. In this circle each father and mother may be God's partner. Every child's life is a seed-plot where the fruits of love and faith will surely grow if they are sown and nourished by that double Providence which ought to watch over every young life.

A nation is a wider sphere. What an opportunity it offers to a wise ruler the pages of history will show. All statesmanship may be considered as Human Providence, on which judgement will be pronounced by-and-by according to its fidelity to the abiding ends for which God has raised it up. In the sphere of Church life and of philanthropy of every kind, Divine Providence is not less manifestly seeking to enlist and cultivate the best powers of its human allies.

Abiding comfort may be found in the fact of such a partnership between Divine and Human Providence. We are God's instruments; He knows how to use us. He knows also where to support and supplement our efforts. We must leave God to decide how and when His power and wisdom shall be brought in to sustain human agency. Man's business is to be single in his purpose, to do all things to the glory of God. The art of always helping and never hindering Providence is perhaps the greatest that the Church and its individual members have to master.

History is a book of lessons from which wise men are always being taught how to avoid failure and how to win victory for truth and holiness. Personal experience is a still more striking lesson stamped on the memory and heart, that man may become a more efficient and useful ally of Divine Providence. Faith in God must be joined to faith in ourselves as His instruments. 'Put your trust in God, and keep your powder dry,' was Cromwell's counsel. The alliance between God and man is so close that no room is left for despair. 'Providence is my next-door neighbour.' It is our business to knock and ask for help.

Such considerations make a wise man content to be laid aside or passed over when his task is done. God is the Abiding Partner. He endures; His tools wear out. We cannot bear too great and long-continued strain. God gives us the opportunity to retire. Sometimes from such a corner men watch others do their work better than they could have done it themselves. Charles Wesley was wise in his great saying: 'God buries His workmen, but carries on His work.' The chief question to be asked at any man's death-bed is, 'Has he done his providential work?' The glory of a life is reached when it can humbly echo St. Paul's word: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith' (2 Tim. iv. 7).

Nor is it unfitting to suggest that powers diligently cultivated and wisely used on earth may be employed

hereafter in ways that will surprise and delight us. St. John's phrase, 'His servants shall serve Him,' suggests that we may be agents of Divine Providence in another and wider sphere. Dean Hole put this beautifully in a letter to a bereaved friend—

> The 'dead' are, I believe, more with us, can do more for us, than the living. In a very short time you will *know* this. You will feel yourself inclined, *inspired*, to do more for the Saviour, whom you have always loved, than you have ever done.[1]

The vision of Human Providence discharged from its mortal tasks and re-enlisted in wider fields of service is a supreme inspiration to present fidelity.

[1] *Letters of S. R. Hole*, p. 71.

III

THE BIBLE AS A BOOK OF PROVIDENCE

All the Oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, describe so many scenes of Divine Providence.—Wesley, *Works*, vi. 314.

The Bible is a striking epitome of the whole doctrine of Nature and Providence, in which God is not *immediately* with us, but presents Himself through the existence and operation of men and things.—Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, i. 29.

There can be little doubt that she (the Church) would gain something from the exercise within her borders of a freedom in discussing topics relating to the character and providence of God similar to those so splendidly exemplified in the Book of Job.—Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 4.

For the Hebrew prophets, 'the theatre of Providence was this present world, and the drama of history an effective, if not a perfect, demonstration of divine righteousness.'—Ibid., p. 195.

The Bible is the book of Providence, but with the key attached.—Dykes, *The Christian Minister*, p. 237.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Bible account of Creation	27
Providence in Bible lives—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Esther	28
Providence in Jewish history	31
Providence in the Psalms	32
Problems of Providence in the Psalms	36
Providence in the Book of Job	37
In Memoriam a companion picture	45
The Fortieth of Isaiah and the Hebrew prophets	45
The Sermon on the Mount	46
St. Paul's view of Providence	48
Christianity a new promulgation of Providence	49
Some Hymns on Providence	50

LITERATURE

The fullest general view is given in Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament.* See also Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament;* Bishop Gibson, *The Book of Job;* Lyttelton, *The Sermon on the Mount;* Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty;* T. Jackson, *The Providence of God viewed in the light of Holy Scripture.*

III

MATERIAL for a study of Divine Providence must be drawn from four chief sources—Nature, the Bible, History, and Human Experience. The Scriptures bring us to the heart of these wonders of grace and goodness.

The Old Testament is steeped in this truth. The account of creation, like a glorious panorama, unfolds the whole scene and scope of Divine Providence. God is revealed as the Maker of the earth, who frames it for the home of man; and at every step in its development expresses His satisfaction with the results. 'God saw that it was good.'

> The aesthetic sentiment expressed when God beheld and pronounced all His creations 'very good' (Gen. i. 21) evinces the moral sense as well as the intelligent judgement of the great 'Master Workman.'[1]

He is looking on the earth as the sphere for the carrying out of His plans, and all nature thus approves itself to its Maker. That is the view of Providence as it shines forth from the wonderful Creation story in

[1] Dr. Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, pp. 573–4.

the book of Genesis. We are not here concerned as to any supposed need of reconciliation between science and the Bible. Huxley's opinion was that 'Genesis is honest to the core, and professes to be no more than it is, a repository of venerable traditions of unknown origin, claiming no scientific authority and possessing none.'[1]

Professor Oehler, in treating of 'The Aim of the World, and its Realization through Providence,' says—

> The account of the Creation shows that a divine aim is to realize itself in the world. . . . In all creation God completes acts of self-satisfaction, but still the creating God does not reach the goal of His creation until He has set over against Him His image in man. From this last point it is to be gathered that the self-delineation of God, the unveiling of His essence, is the final aim of the creation of the world; or, as it is more commonly expressed, that the whole world serves the revelation of the divine glory, and is thereby the object of divine joy (Ps. civ. 31). The Old Testament contemplation of nature rests on this fundamental conception.[2]

No sooner does the world receive its first inhabitants than God's providence begins to direct their steps. Every Bible life is a lesson in the ways of Providence. Men and nations—God's hand is over all. The story of Abraham opens that wonderful history of the man and the race whom Providence selected as special

[1] Darwin's *Life and Letters*, ii. 181.
[2] Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, i. 175.

instruments for the fulfilment of its purposes. Abraham is brought out from his idolatrous associations among the Chaldaeans that he may become the father of the chosen nation. His family history is a chain of providences. Hagar has her share in the blessing when in the desert 'she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after Him that seeth me?' (Gen. xvi. 13). Jacob pays tribute to the providential care that had made his way prosperous in Padan-aram: 'Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight' (Gen. xxxi. 42). The patriarch's death-bed survey of all that he owed to Providence is one of the most beautiful tributes ever paid to that Guardian care which he covets for Joseph's sons: 'The God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads' (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16).

Joseph's life is a memorable study of Providence. He is not blind to the way that his steps had been guided to Egypt. He understands how the envy of his brothers had been overruled for their own good. 'God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance' (Gen. xlv. 7). By such considerations he seeks to make their judgement on themselves less bitter. 'And

now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life' (Gen. xlv. 5).

Joseph's thought is forcibly used by Mordecai to nerve Esther to become an intercessor for her race before the King of Persia. 'For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' (Esther iv. 14). The doctrine of an overruling Providence pervades that memorable story of the girl-queen. The name of God is not found in it, yet He Himself lives on every page. It illustrates, in a way unsurpassed by any book in Scripture, the overruling providence of God.

Dr. Elder Cumming traces five 'lines of event, interwoven and yet independent, expressing the movement of will in wellnigh a hundred different men, and yet touching each other at countless points of interest and influence, closely connected with the whole action of the story; they form a whole only to be seen when it is complete; one deviation in any of them would make that whole quite different, if not indeed impossible: and they are all, secretly, unknown to most of the actors in it, in the hands of the Unseen God.'[1]

The history of Moses from his cradle in the Nile to his death on Mount Pisgah is a study of Providence.

[1] *Book of Esther*, pp. 86-7.

That is true in its measure of many other Bible stories. Illustration after illustration teaches us to discern the hand of God in other lives and to trace it in our own. Difficulties are cleared away; faith is strengthened to bear delays and avoid misinterpretations of the divine dealings. Perhaps no single verse gathers up the Bible view as to the Providence that watches over human life so completely as that word of Hanani the seer to King Asa: 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him' (2 Chron. xvi. 9).

The canvas is ampler on which God's dealings with the chosen race are set forth. Professor Oehler says—

> The whole pentateuchal history of revelation is nothing but the activity of that divine providence which, in order to the realization of the divine aim, is at once directed to the whole (Deut. xxxii. 8; cf. Acts xvii. 26), and at the same time proves itself efficacious in the direction of the life of separate men, and in guiding of all circumstances, especially in regard to all human helplessness.[1]

Prophet and psalmist regarded this as 'a time in which the guidance of God, His providence and His love, were lavished on Israel to win the people's heart.'[2]

The Old Testament view of Providence finds its

[1] *Old Testament Theology*, i. 175.
[2] Knight, *The Temptation of our Lord*, p. 83.

climax in the Psalms, which embody the deepest thought and experience of the Jewish saints. Dean Church says—

No men ever in this world felt this truth so deeply and so unceasingly—felt it as the living and ever-present principle of each word and thought—as the men whose hearts the Spirit of God taught to write the Psalms. And it was to stamp this truth upon all the ages and degrees and changes of religious faith, to keep it clear and fresh and strong, however men might otherwise differ from one another—rich from poor, learned from unlearned, Greek from Jew, men of this day from the men of hundreds of years ago—it was to keep up among them all this great truth, that in the hands of God man may rest safe—that the Psalms were gathered into one book, and sung as the natural and familiar expression of faith and trust, from generation to generation, from church to church, and have been adopted as household words of prayer. This thought, this truth, that God guides those who trust Him, and never guides them wrong, is the mark, the distinguishing doctrine, the keynote, of the book of Psalms.[1]

Whilst the whole hymn-book of the Jewish Church is steeped in this thought of the divine care for man, some of its loveliest verses may emphatically be described as Providence Psalms. At the head of these stands that Shepherd Psalm which has lifted multitudes in every generation above the clouds of doubt and fear. They have rested in all life's needs on the Providence of the Divine Shepherd. Augustine chose it as the hymn of martyrs. Isaac Taylor says—

[1] *Village Sermons*, pp. 168-9.

In its way down three thousand years or more, this Psalm has penetrated to the depths of millions of hearts; it has gladdened homes of destitution and discomfort; it has whispered hope and joy amid tears to the utterly solitary and forsaken, whose only refuge was in heaven.[1]

The Thirtieth Psalm has a noble passage which describes the transformation wrought by providential interposition in storm-tossed lives.

> Weeping may tarry for the night,
> But joy cometh in the morning. . . .
> Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;
> Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.
> (vv. 5, 11.)

On the last day of his life Bishop Hannington wrote: 'I can hear no news, but was held up by Psalm xxx., which came with great power.'

Dean Church thinks that the first verse of Psalm xxxi., 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed,' is 'the verse of all others which might be taken by itself to express the spirit of all the Psalms.' Every page of the Psalter has thrown its ray of comfort into troubled lives. Psalm xlvi. was Luther's stay amid the conflicts of his life of battles. He loved the Second Psalm also with all his heart. 'It strikes and flashes valiantly among kings, princes, counsellors, judges,' &c. Psalm xci. was described in the Talmud as a 'song of accidents,' or, as Delitzsch puts it, a 'Talismanic song in time of war and

[1] *The Book of Psalms*, p. 29.

pestilence.' An eminent physician in St. Petersburg was of that mind when he recommended it as the best preservation against the cholera.

Three psalms which follow each other claim special attention in this light. Psalm ciii. is one of the sublimest hymns in praise of Providence that was ever penned. Psalm civ. traces through the whole creation the might and mercy of God. Bishop Wordsworth called it an 'Oratorio of Creation.'

> O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
> In wisdom hast Thou made them all:
> The earth is full of Thy riches.
> Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
> Wherein are things creeping innumerable,
> Both small and great beasts.

Alexander von Humboldt says this single psalm almost represents the image of the whole Cosmos.

We are astonished to find, in a lyrical poem of such limited compass, the whole universe, the heavens and earth, sketched with a few bold touches. The contrast of the labour of man with the animal life of Nature, and the image of omnipresent invisible Power, renewing the earth at will, or sweeping it of inhabitants, is a grand and solemn poetical creation.[1]

Psalm cv. traces God's providence through every step of Israel's history. Those three psalms are glorious evidence of the trust in Divine Providence which was the strength of the chosen race. Psalms

[1] *Cosmos*, II. i. p. 413 (Bohn's ed.).

xliv., lxvi., and lxxxv. are thanksgivings for providential mercies. Psalm lxxviii., the longest of the historical psalms, holds up, as Delitzsch puts it, 'The warning mirror of history from Moses to David.' Nor is Psalm cvii. any less impressive as the voice of a rejoicing people. Psalm cxxxvi. has been called the Great Hallel, pouring forth a nation's praise for providential blessing.

Psalm cxxi., the Pilgrim Song of the Jewish feasts, was Bishop Hannington's 'Travelling Psalm.' His companion during his tour in Palestine says—

> Every morning, often in the early dusk, we would have prayers together, and always the 121st Psalm, which I had to read. If the books had been packed away, the Bishop himself would say the Psalm by heart.

Hannington notes in his journal that Mr. Jones 'preached from the 121st Psalm. It being my Travelling Psalm, I take it as a good omen.' William Romaine read the psalm every day. When Charles Kingsley's father was Rector of Clovelly, just before the herring-fleet put out to sea, he went down to the quay with his wife and sons to hold a short parting service, when all joined in singing the old Prayer-book version of the 121st Psalm, as those only can who have death and danger staring them in the face.

> Then thou, my soul, in safety rest,
> Thy Guardian will not sleep.
> Shelter'd beneath th' Almighty wings,
> Thou shalt securely rest.

The memories of those days are enshrined in the lines—

> For men must work, and women must weep;
> And there's little to earn, and many to keep,
> Though the harbour bar be moaning!

'And they made this psalm, in its rough versification, more dear and speaking to him in after life than any hymn ancient or modern of more artistic form.'[1] The fisher-folk faced all dangers of their calling with those glorious thoughts lingering in their memory.

Amid its tributes to Divine Providence the Psalter is not blind to those problems of human life and human society which in all ages have been so hard to understand. The enigmas presented by the sorrows of good men and the prosperity of the wicked are never far from the mind of Jewish psalmists. 'Lord, how long wilt Thou look on?' is the question (Ps. xxxv. 17).

In those Psalms which relate to the contradiction existing between the moral worth of an individual and his external circumstances, we generally find that the knot is not untied, but simply cut through. The righteous man who seems about to perish must nevertheless be delivered, or Jehovah would not be Jehovah; therefore 'for His Name's sake' the wicked, who thinks himself so secure, must perish, as surely as a righteous God exists.[2]

The third book opens with 'A Psalm of Asaph' (Psalm lxxiii.). A good man confesses how the

[1] *Charles Kingsley*, i. 18.
[2] Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, ii. p. 467.

prosperity of the wicked had almost wrecked his faith. He sees at length that the future must be taken into account in any estimate of human life. In the end it will be well with the righteous. The psalmist thus becomes content that Providence shall shape his path. He has grasped the truth that his life is linked to God. God is his companion, his keeper.

> Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel,
> And afterward receive me to glory.

Here the solution of a perplexing problem is 'subjective and personal. The communion with God to which the psalmist has been admitted asserts itself with such strength, that he not only finds therein his full compensation for the prosperity of the wicked, but, rising for the moment superior to death and Sheol, knows himself to be inseparably united to God.' [1]

The subject of Providence is the theme of that noble Jewish poem, the Book of Job, which has filled all readers with wonder. Thomas Carlyle expresses the judgement of every reverent student.

I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem,—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity,

[1] Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, ii. p. 468.

in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconcilement. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. . . . Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind;—so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.[1]

The book belongs to the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrews, where the perplexities and puzzles of natural life and the moral relations of man are discussed, and counsel given by the man of wisdom and experience. It is a wonderful study for those pre-Christian times. Dr. Oehler, in his suggestive discussion of the subject, points out that 'all the enigmas with which Israelite wisdom was occupied are discussed in the Book of Job, and every solution produced upon Old Testament soil attempted.'[2] It teaches that a good man must not be judged merely according to outward appearances, and 'inculcates the duty of abstaining from hasty decisions concerning obscure providences.' We must reserve judgement till the end of the drama. The book shows that there is a fourfold purpose in suffering. It is divine punishment on ungodliness; or it is due to the sinfulness of man, which brings its sorrows to the righteous as well as the wicked. The good man's patient bearing of such chastisement may lead to restored prosperity

[1] *The Hero as Prophet.*
[2] *Theology of the Old Testament*, ii. pp. 472–4.

(ch. xlii. 12–16). Suffering may also be imposed by the love of God to humble the good man and lead him to deeper knowledge of himself; or, as in Job's case, it may be designed to manifest the real fidelity of the righteous man. The sufferer may be brought to the verge of despair, and may be made conscious of many blemishes in his own character through the fiery trial; yet his feet are found on the rock at last.

A story is told of fiery trial which befalls a godly man (chs. i.–iii.). The Hebrew poet lets his readers into the secret of Job's sufferings.

> They formed, as so many sufferings form to-day, a God-permitted Satanic temptation, allowed in order to test the patriarch's faith, and try whether his goodness was genuine, or whether his piety was after all a subtle form of selfishness, a serving God for what he could get out of Him. But of this neither the friends nor Job himself was aware. They only knew what they could see with the eye of sense. Here was a man who had lived in great prosperity, honoured and respected of all men, suddenly overwhelmed with calamity after calamity—his flocks and his herds destroyed, his children dead, himself a victim of a most loathsome disease. What did it all mean? That was the problem before them. What had they got to say to it? [1]

Job's threefold curse of his lot brings home the problem. A good man is stricken down by trouble. The prevailing belief of that day was that sorrow sprang from sin. This is brought out in the conversation between Job and his three friends (chs. iv.–xxvi.).

[1] Gibson, *The Book of Job*, xiii.

Each of the friends states his view of Job's affliction in turn, and to each Job makes reply (chs. iv.–xiv.). Eliphaz is more gentle and considerate, though he hints that Job's case is one of secret sin meeting its penalty. He assumes that '*all* suffering is the punishment of sin,' and fails to see that this does not touch the case of Job. The patriarch finds no comfort in this heartless theory, that adversity is to be interpreted as the frown of Providence on a man's life. Bildad is less careful of Job's feelings. He upholds stoutly the moral principle in the government of the world—goodness is rewarded, wickedness punished. Those hard words almost throw Job's mind off its balance. His reply is 'wild and reckless.' He charges God with 'deliberate cruelty and unfairness in His treatment of him.' The depth of his anguish is seen in every phrase, and in his despair he cries for some relief before he passes into the land of darkness and the shadow of death. Zophar adds another bitter drop to the sufferer's cup by telling him that he has come off better than he deserves. That unhappy speech provokes Job to assert himself—

> What ye know, the same do I know also;
> I am not inferior unto you (xiii. 2).

The problem has now been discussed in the light of the prevailing theory. His friends apply it with less and less generosity and tact as the discussion proceeds. Job refuses to accept it as applicable to himself. He is conscious that his heart has been right with God, and is eager to plead his cause face to face with his Maker.

One more thought has come to him in his agony, for finally there has arisen within him a great longing for a resurrection to a life after death; and his heart goes out towards this, as the one thing which, could he but believe it, would enable him to bear patiently all his present distress.[1]

The second circle of speeches covers seven chapters (xv.–xxi.). Job's friends hold to their theory, but they are less careful of his feelings, more confident that his case is an illustration of it. 'The grave Eliphaz is still the most gentlemanly of the three,' but the cruel strain in Bildad and the coarseness of Zophar become more marked. Job himself is manifestly coming nearer to the light. He reaches the assured conviction of a future life and of God's vindication of him.

But I know that my redeemer liveth,
And that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth (xix. 25).

The facts of life do not sustain the arguments used against him. Wickedness is not invariably punished in this life, but glories in its prosperity (xxi. 8–15). God's moral government is not so simple and easy to understand as Job's friends suppose. The mystery of suffering lies deeper than they dreamed. He himself does not fathom it, but he sees that in the answers to which he has listened 'there remaineth only falsehood' (xxi. 34). He cannot explain his sorrows, but he begins to see a gleam of light, which helps him to possess his

[1] Gibson, *Book of Job*, p. 73.

soul in patience and wait for some revelation of the purposes of God.

In the third circle of speeches (chs. xxii.-xxvi.), Eliphaz is chief spokesman, but he only pushes home his old charge that Job is a sinner, whom he accuses of iniquities without end (xxii. 5–9).

Job holds his ground. Bildad can only utter a few words; Zophar is stricken dumb. Job adds his tribute to God's greatness (chs. xxvii.–xxxi.).

Then he makes his confession of innocence and acknowledges that divine wisdom which towers high above human thought. 'Man is utterly unable to understand the principles that rule in the world. He has his wisdom indeed, which is to "fear the Lord and to depart from evil," but to comprehend the world is quite beyond him.'[1]

In a second speech, Job surveys his happy past in words which in 'grace, and pathos, in charm of picturesque narrative, and pensive, tender, yet self-controlled emotion richly and variously expressed,' have scarcely ever been surpassed. As Dr. Cox says, 'He must be dull and hard indeed who can read these chapters without being touched to the very heart.' It is Job's *Apologia pro vita sua*; and as we see how tender and helpful this man has been to others in his days of prosperity, we understand the bitterness of his heart when he feared that God had forsaken him. The man who could say—

[1] Gibson, *Book of Job*, p. 143.

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
And when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me,

could not accept the censure of his friends or believe that his affliction was due to his sin against God.

After the three friends are silenced, Elihu takes up the discussion. His four speeches (chs. xxxii. 6–xxxvii.) present a new theory of suffering as the means of strengthening character. It is God's discipline. Job has no right to murmur against the Almighty, who cannot do wickedly or pervert judgement. Elihu sternly rebukes the arrogance and the want of reverence displayed in his complaints against God. His providence orders man's life for his moral discipline and improvement. Elihu calls on the patriarch to consider the wondrous works of God and acquiesce in His dealings. The world is God's world, and it is impossible for its Creator and Governor to be unjust. Providence has its enigmas, but a solution of them will in due time be found. 'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind' (chs. xxxviii.–xl. 2). He is bidden to gird up his loins like a man and reply to God's questions. They cover the whole circle of divine activity—the creation of the earth, the control of the sea, and all the wonders of inanimate nature; then God leads Job through the realms of life, where His providence provides for the needs of every creature that He has made. After the survey of nature comes the great home-thrust—

Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it (xl. 2).

Job has no desire to carry on a controversy with God. He lays his hand upon his mouth, and will proceed no further (ch. xl. 3–5). But the Almighty has not finished his lesson. Once more Job is called to gird up his loins like a man, and answer the divine questions (xl. 6–xli. 34).

As he had questioned the principles of God's rule he is ironically invited to assume the divine attributes, and rule the world himself. And as a test of his capabilities, two formidable creatures, the work of God's hand like himself, are described at some length, and he is asked whether he can subdue them.[1]

The descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan—the hippopotamus and the crocodile—show God's glory in His works. The two speeches produce their intended result. Job is dumb in the presence of his Maker. He pleads guilty to the charge of presumption in meddling with the affairs of Providence, and saying that there was no moral government of the world. He understands at last that the whole scheme of Divine Providence is too vast and difficult for man to comprehend. God knows the way that He takes, and will watch over the development of all things as He watched over their beginning (ch. xlii. 1–6).

That acquiescence in the rule of God is accepted. Job's friends, who had been so blind and harsh in their judgement of his affliction, are rebuked, and the

[1] Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 402.

life that had been clouded with trouble is crowned with the riches of providential favour.

Dr. Gibson says *In Memoriam* 'is well worthy study as a companion picture of a mind gradually righting itself in the face of a great problem of suffering.'

> He faced the spectres of the mind,
> And laid them: thus he came at length
>
> To find a stronger faith his own;
> And Power was with him in the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone,
>
> But in the darkness and the cloud,
> As over Sinai's peaks of old.[1]

The Hebrew prophets regard the world as the scene for the unfolding of God's providence. He is on the side of righteousness; His face is set against injustice and impurity. Man is to fulfil his part in God's scheme by obedience to his Maker's will. The divine curse is pronounced on all tyranny, all hardness towards the poor, all selfish luxury won by oppression. As we read the Minor Prophets, we feel that man is at the bar of the God of Providence. 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' (Micah vi. 8).

One chapter in Isaiah stands out as the sublimest study of Providence in prophetic literature. Dr. A. B. Davidson's title for the latter half of this fortieth

[1] *In Memoriam*, canto xcvi.

chapter (verses 12–31) is 'Jehovah, God of Israel, the Incomparable.' Creation reveals His infinite power and wisdom. The starry world is sustained by His unfailing might. 'For that He is strong in power not one is lacking.' Man need not fear lest he should be overlooked by the Creator of the ends of the earth, 'who fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding.' Youth itself faints and utterly falls under the strain of life, but the God of Providence is a never-failing spring of help and grace to all who trust Him: 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'

The New Testament is a rich field for the student of this subject. Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is His chief exposition and unfolding of the providence of God. The precepts there given to His disciples are 'all, ultimately, based on a certain view of God's relation to man, namely, that we are the children of a Heavenly Father who cares for us and guides our lives. Thus our lives are in every respect to have a Godward aim.'[1] The demands made on obedience can only be met when that truth of Divine Providence is embraced and held fast. The Sermon has nothing to say of 'a First Cause, conceived of, no matter how unphilosophically, as a Spirit Power which was able to

[1] Lyttelton, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 4.

set going the universe, and all its marvels, and then to remain aloof as a mere spectator of its subsequent history.'[1] The touch of God's fatherly love for, and active intervention on behalf of, His creatures, is woven into the fibre of the whole discourse, and 'our admiration of Christ's teaching is, literally, not in spite of, but because of, its deep and simple recognition of an acting, benevolent God.'[2]

The warning against anxiety is made reasonable by the illustrations drawn from Nature. God will not allow man's 'spiritual efforts to be spoilt by the physical life failing for want of support. In other words, we have to do with a Heavenly Father who is a God of bounty and loving-kindness, and who, having regard to the purpose of each created thing's existence, gives without stint what is necessary for that purpose to be achieved.'[3] If there were no Providence behind him the higher faculties and activities of man would be unable to fulfil themselves. The Sermon on the Mount makes great demands on the true disciple, but it opens his eyes to the Father's care and love for all His creatures in a way that gives strength to meet them all.

Such a portrait of God had never been painted for the world to gaze upon. 'Your Father' knows and loves and lavishes His gifts even on the unkind and the unthankful. As we read the words of Jesus, the beloved Son, God seems to be brought down from the clouds to

[1] Lyttelton, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 11.
[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 297.

our homes and hearts. The Divine Providence is the source of strength and help for the whole creation.

But our Lord never allows Divine Providence to eclipse prudence and fidelity to earthly duty. All His teaching is based on the supposition that men will use their God-given powers wisely. If Human Providence is faithful to its trust, there is no room for fretting or anxious care.

Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness [Matt. vi. 33], is the counsel with which He concludes His special teaching on the relation of His disciples to the providence of the heavenly Father.[1]

The Sermon on the Mount sums up the spirit of the New Testament. Everything bears the stamp of Divine Providence. St. Paul's life is shaped and ruled by it. Onesimus, the slave in Rome, reminds us of Joseph in Egypt. 'For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever' (Philem. 15). The apostle's teaching as to Providence is summed up in that classic passage: 'We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, *even* to them that are called according to His purpose' (Rom. viii. 28).

Christianity [as Butler puts it] is not only an external institution of natural religion, and a new promulgation of God's general providence, as righteous Governor and Judge of the world; but it contains also a revelation of a particular dispensation of Providence, carrying on by His Son and Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in Scripture to be in a state of ruin.[2]

[1] 'Providence,' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.*

[2] *Analogy*, Part II. ch. i. § 14.

Redemption thus underlies all doctrines of Providence. The salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ makes every other interposition of God for man reasonable, and contains them all in germ.

For example, when Jacob, David, or any other psalmist applies it to one, or to a series of providences in his own behalf, or that of his country, he did so because a Redemptional Providence is a necessary counterpart of a Redemptional Grace, and its relations to every human interest. That which saves and perfects the *nature* of man must entail upon him all minor interests as an appanage to itself.[1]

The last pages of the New Testament show how the roll which 'contains and interprets human history,' the complete unfolding of the purposes and providence of God, is opened by 'the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,' who 'hath overcome, to open the book and the Seven Seals thereof.' When the Lamb takes it into His hands the new song is sung: 'Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth' (Rev. v. 5, 9, 10).

The hymn-writers have been the most popular exponents of the Bible doctrine of Providence. Luther's faith in Providence glows in his battle hymn—

[1] Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, i. 147

A safe stronghold our God is still (466).
Out of the depths I cry to Thee (514)

helped him to 'defy the devil and praise God' during the diet of Augsburg. George Neumark's

Leave God to order all thy ways (406)

was written in memory of unlooked-for providential succour. Gerhardt has sustained the hearts of a great multitude by the verses which John Wesley translated—

Commit thou all thy griefs (480).
Give to the winds thy fears (481).

No hymn strikes a bolder note than Sternhold's

O God, my strength and fortitude (14).

Dr. Watts is represented by

My Shepherd will supply my need (87).
O God, our help in ages past (812).

Doddridge's prayer never fails to meet our need—

O God of Bethel, by whose hand (95).

Charles Wesley's hymns are a book of Providence which record the mercies of his own life, and a poetic history of the gracious Providence which watched over every step of the Evangelical Revival. Wales contributes a noble hymn,

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah (615);

and Cowper touches the double chord of mystery in

Sometimes a light surprises (479),

and in 'the greatest hymn on divine providence'—

God moves in a mysterious way (488).

The numbers are those of *The Methodist Hymn-Book.*

IV

PROVIDENCE IN OTHER RELIGIONS

Πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέουσ' ἄνθρωποι (All men have need of gods).—*Odyssey*, 3. 48.

Dedit hoc Providentia hominibus munus, ut honesta magis juvarent. —QUINTILIAN.

Tie up your camel as best you can, and then trust it to Providence. —MOHAMMED.

But no desire nor hope of common advantage to come can move or unite Arabians: neither love they too well that safeguarding human forethought, which savours to them of untrust in an heavenly Providence. Their religion encourages them to seek medicines—which God has created in the earth to the service of man; but they may not flee from the pestilence.—DOUGHTY'S *Wanderings in Arabia* (Garnett's abridgement), ii. 188.

Heathenism is religion 'run wild.' But, on the other hand, not only does it seem unjust to grant to the heathen no sort of share in preparing the way for the absolute religion, but it is to be considered that the all-embracing rule of Divine Providence in these wide tracts of humanity cannot have been without result.—DORNER, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, ii. 237.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Providence and Comparative Religion	53
Faith in a form and measure of Providential help almost universal	55
In Egypt and Persia	55
Providence in Homer and Hesiod	56
In the life of Athens	57
The irony of Xenophanes	58
Anaxagoras on Nature	59
Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle	59
Poets and Historians	61
Epicurean and Stoic teaching	63
Zeno and Cleanthes	64
Stoic teachers in Rome	65
Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius	67
Criticism by Professor James	69
Roman religion	70
Mohammedanism and Providence	71
Providence in the religions of India	73
Buddhism no Divine Providence	75
Confucius and Heaven	76
Crude beliefs of early times	77
Providence in the religions of Peru and Mexico	78
Beliefs of North American Indians	79
The conclusions reached	80

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IV

IT may be well at this stage of our inquiry to consider the views as to Divine Providence which were accepted in the ancient world outside Judaism, and which are held in regions beyond the Christian pale to-day. The theology of our time is not blind to the light shining in those outer courts of the temple. The science of comparative religion lies in germ in St. Paul's speech to the philosophers of Athens. The Jewish scholar is no stranger to the study which exerts a fascination over our generation. He gives apostolic sanction to a wisely considered and enlightened view of this subject. No yawning chasm stretches between himself and the company gathered on Mars' Hill. They are children of the same Father, they are dwellers in the same world; they are being divinely guided towards the same goal. The destiny of their race and of his own is shaped by the same Divine Providence. 'He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He

is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring' (Acts xvii. 26–8).

St. Paul was quoting from Aratus, a native of his own province of Cilicia—

> From God begin we—who can touch the string
> And not harp praise to Heaven's eternal king?
> He animates the mart and crowded way,
> The restless ocean, and the sheltered bay.
> Does care perplex? Is lowering danger nigh?
> We are His offspring, and to God we fly.

To look into the heart and mind of men of other faiths and see how they regarded these vital questions is profoundly impressive and instructive. What care did the gods in whom they believed take of them and their affairs? How far did heaven understand their life and enter into it?

Dr. Bruce wished to embark on a study of Providence in Pagan, Hebrew, and Modern Thought.

> One would like to know how the question of Providence presented itself to men in different lands and ages, familiar with the facts of life, and given to earnest reflection thereon; especially to men belonging to peoples among whom the ethical consciousness reached a high measure of intensity—such as the ancient Indians and Persians, the Greeks, and above all the Hebrews. Such knowledge might not only gratify intellectual curiosity, but prove helpful to faith.[1]

[1] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, pp. 22–3.

Religion has been defined as 'the expression of human needs with reference to higher beings who are supposed to be capable of fulfilling man's desires.'[1]

Faith in a form and measure of providential guidance seems to be wellnigh universal. Even in the lowest forms of religion we trace belief in a higher power external to man, a belief hazy and ill-outlined it may be, but still real; in a power that can help or injure, and to which reverence and service are due.

The ancient Egyptians had a faith in 'a supreme God, self-existing and eternal, creator of all things,' but this was often joined with a mass of superstitions. Men had to defend their lives by incantations from all manner of imagined perils, and put their trust in 'a childish magic, for the nearest parallel to which we must go to the negroes of Central or Western Africa.' The conception of Destiny or Fate was not unlike that of the Greeks.[2]

A hymn as old as the time of Moses has been preserved which shows an enlightened faith in an overruling Providence.

> Praise to Amen-Ra,
> The good God beloved,
> Giving life to all animated things:
> to all fair cattle:
> Maker of men, Creator of beasts:
> Lord of existences, Creator of fruitful trees:
> Maker of herbs, Feeder of cattle.[3]

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[1] Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 424.

[2] Geden's *Studies in Comparative Religion*, pp. 8, 47, 66, 67.

[3] *Records of the Past*, ii. 129.

In Persia Zoroaster looked on the world as a theatre where the Good Spirit, 'lord of the whole universe, creator of all, author and giver of light and life, and of everything that is good,' wages a never-ending conflict with the hurtful power to whom are due darkness, death, and every form of evil. Men took sides in this conflict according to their own nature, but good was destined to triumph. 'In the conflict of these powers lay the idea of Providence, controlling the evil.'[1]

The most gifted nation of antiquity almost regarded Homer and Hesiod as their Bible. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the gods rule over separate realms, in which they have a 'vague omnipotence.' Their providence watches over cities and nations, though they sometimes reproach each other for taking human affairs too seriously. Their home above the clouds is hidden from the sight of men.

They favour and protect their worshippers; they take part with this or that warrior; they resent the death of their sons, and in other ways are moved by passion and desire. Zeus exercises a sort of limited monarchy over this distracted realm; in the long run he controls it absolutely, for his will and the determination of fate are one.[2]

Zeus is thus 'a kind of providence in whom a man may trust when he does right, and to all whose dispensations it behoves him humbly to submit.'[3]

[1] Pope, *A Higher Catechism of Theology*, p. 110.
[2] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 56.
[3] Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 286.

The story of Odysseus depicts a life enriched and saved from wreck by the favour of the gods. 'Faithfulness, patience, endurance, temperance, are sure of their reward.'[1]

If Athens be taken as representing Greek views on Providence, we find Zeus there worshipped as the protector of the city. He presides 'over the council, the assembly, the family, the phratry, the dues of hospitality, of friendship, and of comradeship, combining the attributes of a universal and particular providence.'[2]

Apollo's altar stood before the chief entrance of all the more important houses, so that he was 'in a manner omnipresent. And if he ever seemed to be absent, was he not named βοηδρόμιος, "runner to the rescue," on whom pious hearts might call in distress?'[3]

Glaucus says in his prayer to Apollo, 'Everywhere canst thou hear a man in sorrow such as my sorrow is.'[4] Apollo's sister, Artemis, was the woman's Providence, whilst Athene was an additional providence to protect, enlighten, guide, and instruct her favoured people.

Homer attributes omniscience to the gods, though some episodes of the *Iliad* do not bear out this view. Pindar's theology marks a distinct advance here. The just are specially cared for by God. 'Surely the great mind of Zeus pilots the destiny of those whom

[1] Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 99.
[2] Ibid., p. 212.
[3] Ibid., p. 214.
[4] *Iliad*, xvi. 516.

he loves.' Heraclitus had already spoken of 'the intelligence by which all things are piloted through all.' His idea of Providence is that of a principle which includes both nature and man in its sway, but Pindar's thought is narrower and more personal.[1]

In the course of ages enlightened men grew impatient with the ancestral religion. Xenophanes (born about 570 B.C.) ridiculed the anthropomorphism of Homer and Hesiod, and resented their ascription of human passion to the gods. The irony which he poured on the old beliefs showed that the national conscience was aroused. Morality had outgrown religion. The Athenian philosopher felt that to copy his divinities would spoil his world.

> Such things of the gods are related by Homer and Hesiod
> As to mankind would be shame and abiding disgrace,
> Promises broken, and thefts and mutual treachery.[2]

His own theology is given in a fragment of his poetry—

> One God of all things, divine and human the greatest:
> Neither in body alike unto mortals, nor in spirit:
> Without labour he ruleth all things, by reason and insight.[3]

The shock of this attack which Xenophanes made on traditional beliefs was terrible. 'Religion in Greece received its death-blow.'[4]

[1] Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, pp. 120–1.
[2] Karlton's *Xenophanes Fragment*, vii.
[3] Alexander, *History of Greek Philosophy*, p. 18.
[4] *Lux Mundi*, p. 70.

A century later Anaxagoras (born about 500 B.C.) grappled with the problems of the universe. In a work on Nature he taught that νοῦς, or reason, governs the world. Its inert, chaotic constituents had been set in motion and combined into one harmonious system by a mind working towards special ends. His view was vague and unsatisfactory. Nature was not ruled over by self-conscious reason, but was subject to universal laws. This was the first instance of a teleological explanation of the universe, and laid the basis for later arguments from design. Such a glimpse into the workshop of Providence, given by this friend of Pericles, marks an epoch in the thought of the city which already gloried in the Parthenon and the masterpieces of Phidias. Its contrast to the contemporary teaching of the Old Testament is almost startling. Yet his view that the universe was the work of intelligence made Anaxagoras seem 'like a sober man amongst random talkers.'[1] Both Plato and Aristotle 'accuse him of losing the truth which he had gained because he made intelligence appear only on occasions in the world, dragged in, like a stage-god, when naturalistic explanations failed.'[2]

Socrates saw a Providence in the arrangement and adaptation of the world. 'Where knowledge cannot reach Socrates seems to put forth a faith in Providence,

[1] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 12; Alexander, *Short History of Philosophy*, pp. 29–30.

[2] *Lux Mundi*, p. 93.

falling back on his daimonion for inspiration where insight fails.' [1]

That inward voice was his own secret counsellor in all times of perplexity. He held that men should exert themselves to obtain what the gods had placed within their reach, and only turn to prayer and divination in cases of perplexity and doubt. Every prayer must be offered 'with the reservation that such and such a wish should be accomplished only if God saw that it was for good.' [2]

Plato was the disciple of Socrates for the last eight years of that great master's life. He then travelled widely in Egypt, Italy, and Sicily, and came home enriched with ideas to take up his work as a teacher of philosophy in Athens. He sympathized with the views of Xenophanes, and proposed to establish a censorship of the poets so that their objectionable stories about the gods might be cut out. He did not hesitate to charge them with 'the fault of telling a lie, and a bad lie.' [3] In his view God was perfect and unchangeable; true and the author of truth. The world was an emanation from God, who fashioned it out of matter which was eternal and partly intractable. He cannot be the author of evil; and if He afflicts mankind it is to purify them from unrighteousness. A lofty view of God's relation to man is thus opened out by this great thinker of Greece.

[1] Alexander, *Greek Philosophy*, p. 42.
[2] Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 331.
[3] Jowett's *Republic*, p. 60.

In his *Spirit of the Laws*, Plato shows those who disbelieved in Divine Providence that

the ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the preservation and perfection of the whole, and each part has an appointed state of action and passion ; and the smallest action or passion of any part affecting the minutest fraction has a presiding minister. And one of these portions of the universe is thine own, stubborn man, which, however little, has the whole in view ; and you do not seem to be aware that this and every other creation is for the sake of the whole, and in order that the life of the whole may be blessed ; and that you are created for the sake of the whole, and not the whole for the sake of you.[1]

Aristotle believed in an Intelligence which had set in motion the whole universe. Nature is rational from beginning to end. 'The universe is a thought in the mind of God, and man is God's thought becoming self-conscious.'[2]

God [in his view] is the ground of all movement, the support of order and life ; but He is above the world and does not interfere directly with it. No true contact and commerce between God and man is possible.[3]

Such limitations of Providence are referred to with disapproval by Tatian and Ambrose.[4]

We pass from the philosophers, who are the glory of Athens, to the great dramatists. Aeschylus and Sophocles

[1] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 358.
[2] Alexander, *Greek Philosophy*, p. 69.
[3] Scullard, *Early Christian Ethics*, p. 44.
[4] Ibid., p. 42.

believe in a divine order which upholds the supremacy of the eternal laws of holiness and purity. To infringe these brings inevitable disaster. Aeschylus maintains that the gods of Olympus, 'who are so full of loving-kindness and wise providence,' are like the terrible gods of the nether world, working out the law of righteousness under the constraint of 'necessity.' Aeschylus makes it clear that the troubles of Oedipus do not shake the faith of the old blind king or the chorus of Athenian elders in Providence. 'Oedipus rises far above Lear in dignity, though not in pity; just because his troubles come from the gods or from fate; and he reconciles himself even to them in the end.'[1]

Euripides seems largely to have lost faith in a divine providence, and the cloud of pessimism settled down on his work.[2]

Sophocles speaks of misfortunes foretold by Apollo, but 'they rain down alike on the just and the unjust.'[3]

Herodotus, the father of history, teaches that it is not possible for man to avert the decisions of Providence. Before the battle of Plataia (479 B.C.) a Theban gave a feast to the Persian generals. One of them told Thersander that after a little time few of the army would be alive. He expressed his feeling that this was inevitable.

[1] Jebb, *Greek Literature*, p. 82.
[2] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, pp. 305–10.
[3] *Edinburgh Review*, No. 423, pp. 183–6.

Friend, that which is destined to come from God, it is impossible for a man to avert; for no man is willing to follow counsel, even when one speaks that which is reasonable. And these things which I say many of us Persians know well; yet we go with the rest being bound in the bonds of necessity; and the most hateful grief of all human griefs is this, to have knowledge of the truth but no power over the event.[1]

The later schools of Greek philosophy represented by the Epicureans and Stoics held antagonistic views as to Providence. The Epicureans shut out from their 'explanation of Nature everything that would suggest government, or law, or adaptation.'[2] To them the Stoic belief in Providence appeared but 'a refined illusion.'[3] Epicurus was noted for gentleness and humanity, and that spirit was cultivated by his disciples, but his whole system was anti-religious. The gods were indifferent to human affairs or cared only for more important matters. Hume says justly that Epicurus denied 'a divine existence, and consequently a providence and a future state.'[4]

The attitude of the school is well described by Professor Gwatkin.

The Epicureans could find no better plan than that of respectfully moving the gods upstairs out of the way.

[1] Herodotus, ix. 16, G. C. Macaulay's translation.
[2] Alexander, *Greek Philosophy*, p. 95.
[3] Ibid., p. 96.
[4] *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. xi.

They were too blessed, forsooth, to concern themselves with the affairs of men.[1]

According to the Stoics the Epicurean doctrine that the world had arisen by a fortuitous concourse of atoms gave a wrong conception of Providence, and made all things an inexplicable riddle. Stoicism had its Greek and its Roman period. For the views of the first masters of the school our material is scanty. Zeno, the founder, who flourished about 308 B.C., identified Fate as Providence. The supreme being is under the sway of Moira, who rules human affairs. Cleanthes rejected the identification of Fate with Providence 'in face of the existence of evil in the world; for evil, he thought, though fated, cannot be said to owe its being to forethought or providence—though predetermined it is not foreordained.' His explanations of the universe were 'strenuously materialistic,' yet he infuses 'into his submission to the Cosmic Order such an amount of willing acquiescence as to give us the impression of the deepest religious feeling. "Lead me, O Zeus," he cries, "and thou, destiny, whithersoever I am ordained by you to go, I will follow without hesitation. And even if, in evil mood, I will not, none the less must I follow."'[2]

Cleanthes was the author of that *Hymn to Zeus* which is an epitome of Stoic theology and 'the perfection of Stoic prayers.' It begins—

[1] *The Knowledge of God*, i. 282.
[2] Davidson, *The Stoic Creed*, p. 229.

Above all gods most glorious, invoked by many a name, almighty evermore, who didst found the world and guidest all by law—O Zeus, hail! for it is right that all mortals address Thee. We are Thine offspring, alone of mortal things that live and walk the earth moulded in image of the All; therefore, Thee will I hymn and sing Thy might continually. Thee doth all this system that rolls round the earth obey in whatsoever path Thou guidest it, and willingly is it governed by Thee. . . . Without Thee, O Divinity, no deed is done on earth, nor in the ethereal vault divine, nor in the deep, save only what wicked men do in the folly of their hearts. Nay more, what is uneven, Thy skill doth make even; what knew not order, it setteth in order; and things that strive find all in Thee, a friend. For thus hast Thou fitted all, evil with good, in one great whole, so that in all things reigns one reason everlastingly.[1]

Seneca teaches that God is subject to the power of Fate.[2] He cannot change the substance of the universe. It is not God who rolls along the thunder, but Fate. The most enlightened teachers of the school shook off this thraldom in some measure. To them Fate was the embodiment of law and order. Human actions must be followed by certain consequences, and even the deity did not act capriciously. He had regard to law and order, so that reason guided the world.[3]

But the best men had little comfort to give to those who frequented their lecture-rooms. Panaetius and

[1] Davidson, *The Stoic Creed*, pp. 235–6.

[2] 'Irrevocabilis humana pariter ac divina cursus vehit' (*De Providentia*, v. 6).

[3] Davidson, *The Stoic Creed*, p. 228.

Posidonius, the two teachers who were largely the means of introducing Stoicism into Rome, 'denied the immortality of the soul, rejected the idea of Providence, and admitted no particular or special revelation. The simile of human life was the dog tied behind the carriage.'[1]

Posidonius was the teacher of Cicero. Ritter maintains that Cicero did not believe in Providence, Zeller and Dr. Mayor think that he did.[2] For him Providence is part of Prudence. The great Roman orator does not hesitate to express the view that all things are carried on under the supervision of the gods: 'Deorum moderamine cuncta geri.' To him also we owe the saying, 'Magna dii curant, parva negligunt.'[3] His discussion of the subject ends in the 'lame and impotent conclusion' that the speech of Cotta, who argued in defence of the being and providence of God, seemed more probable than what his opponent had advanced to the contrary.[4]

If this is the position of an enlightened teacher we can understand the attitude of less noble minds. 'A disbelief in the ancient gods and a doubt of all divine Providence is a matter of open profession at the beginning of the Christian era.'[5]

Stoicism culminated in three great teachers of its

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 139.
[2] Scullard, *Early Christian Ethics*, p. 56.
[3] *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 66.
[4] Wesley, *Works*, vi. 314.
[5] *Lux Mundi*, p. 148.

Roman period—Seneca (3–65 A.D.), Epictetus, who left Rome in 94 A.D., and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121–180 A.D.). Seneca wrote a treatise on Providence in which he insists on the immense value of hardships and difficulties in producing manly spirits. Men are compared to soldiers and sailors who must become inured to danger, or to trees rooted by wind and tempest.

Epictetus, the cripple and slave who became a teacher of Stoicism in Rome, is a convinced Theist. The hero whom he describes did not lament at leaving his children orphans, for he 'knew that no man is an Orphan, but it is the Father that careth for all continually and for evermore. Not by mere report had he heard that the Supreme God is the Father of men: seeing that he called Him *Father*, believing Him so to be, and in all that he did had ever his eyes fixed upon Him. Wherefore in whatever place he was, there it was given him to live happily.'[1]

His *Golden Sayings* open thus—

> Are these the only works of Providence in us? What words suffice to praise or set them forth? Had we but understanding, should we ever cease hymning and blessing the Divine Power, both openly and in secret, and telling of His gracious gifts? God [he says later] hath placed by the side of each a man's own Guardian Spirit, who is charged to watch over him—a Guardian who sleeps not nor is deceived.[2]

[1] *Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, cxxiv.
[2] Ibid., I, xxxvii.

He holds up his head among men as one whose 'thoughts have been the thought of a Friend of the Gods—of a servant, yet of One that hath a part in the government of the Supreme God.'[1]

The Roman Emperor is a still more interesting exponent of this subject. Dean Merivale says he 'advances beyond Epictetus, seeming to arrive at a genuine conviction of a moral Providence.'[2] He is not slow to discern that it is 'either an ordered Universe, or else a welter of confusion. Assuredly, then, a world-order. Or think you that order subsisting within yourself is compatible with disorder in the All.'[3]

Refresh yourself with the alternative: either a foreseeing providence, or blind atoms—and all the abounding proofs that the world is, as it were, a city.[4]

Providence pervades God's world. The workings of chance are part of nature, the web and woof of the dispositions of Providence. From Providence flows all; and side by side with it is necessity and the advantage of the Universe, of which you are a part.[5]

The Deity is the Reason of the World and Divine Forethought or Providence (*πρόνοια*). In Aurelius we have a calm, reiterated insistence, an

unqualified belief in the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of Providence, i.e. of the World-Order (personality

[1] *Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, cxix.
[2] *Romans under the Empire.*
[3] *Marcus Aurelius*, '*To Himself*,' Dr. Rendall's edition, iv. 27.
[4] iv. 3.
[5] *Aur. Med.*, ii. 3.

being out of count), and implicit trust therein. Whatever befalls us here, and whenever it befalls us, is and must be for the best; for it is conducive to the good of the whole, and what is serviceable to the whole cannot be prejudicial to any one of its parts.

The World-course, proceeding uniformly, and not capriciously, or at mere random, is synonymous with the presidency and overruling providence of God. . . . The individual and the community alike are under the rule and forethought of the Supreme: i.e. in regard to great things, for small things seemed to the Stoic (though not at all times) too insignificant to attract the divine care—*magna dii curant, parva negligunt*. In this way, Providence being both universal and special, no man should be over-anxious about what is to happen to him here: all is graciously and wisely ordered. A man's lot and the circumstances of life are both in the hands of the Deity. He is part of the whole; and God cares for the whole, and, therefore, for the parts.[1]

Yet the sunshine is lacking. Professor James says—

When Marcus Aurelius reflects on the eternal reason that has ordered things, there is a frosty chill about his words which you rarely find in a Jewish, and never in a Christian piece of religious writing. Compare his fine sentence, 'If God care not for me or my children, here is a reason for it,' with Job's cry: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!' And you immediately see the difference I mean. The *anima mundi*, to whose disposal of his own personal destiny the Stoic consents, is there to be respected and submitted to, but the Christian God is there to be loved; and the difference of emotional atmosphere is like that

[1] Davidson, *The Stoic Creed*, p. 211.

between the arctic climate and the tropics, though the outcome in the way of accepting actual conditions uncomplainingly may seem in abstract terms to be much the same.[1]

Aurelius shows some advance beyond Epictetus. 'The pupil is wiser than his master, and seems to arrive at a genuine conviction of a moral providence.'[2] Yet for Marcus Aurelius, the noblest representative of his school, God is 'still far away, that mysterious power of fate with whom it is impossible to make an eternal covenant, that Sublime Being who is of such a nature that any contact with the world would defile Him.'[3]

Nevertheless, if we leave the religion of Israel out of account, that of Rome was the flower of the ancient world.

The higher the conception of the divine, the harder it is to make men live constantly in its presence, as the old Romans did. At every step of life he referred him to the gods by sacrifice, libation, or other observance, and at every undertaking inquired of them by omens or augury. Holy days were frequent, but holy rites never ceased. In some ways the old Roman is the very best of the ancient heathens. . . . The high moral tone of Roman life was a marvel to Greeks in the time of Polybius ; and they were not mistaken in tracing it to religion, though it was no direct result of religion. There was nothing moral in the religion itself beyond the fact that it was a religion of some

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 42. Cf. a still finer contrast by Matthew Arnold, *Victoria Magazine*, November, 1863.

[2] Merivale, *The Romans under the Empire*, vii. 616–7.

[3] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 14.

sort. The gods were no givers of spiritual things, and the Roman's prayer was always for natural benefits like health, good crops, or victory in war.[1]

Mohammedanism is marked by a lofty faith in Divine Providence. That does not surprise us when we bear in mind Mohammed's debt to the Hebrew Scriptures. He made good use of his material. In his view Man is the creature of God, from whom he receives all the blessings of life. The Throne Verse, often repeated after the five daily prayers and inscribed in mosques, runs thus—

God, there is no God but He, the living, the self-subsisting. Slumber takes Him not, nor sleep. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. . . . His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and it burdens Him not to guard them both, for He is high and great.

Other passages bring out the same truth.

Say, O God, Lord of the kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest, and strippest the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest; Thou honourest whom Thou pleasest, and abasest whom Thou pleasest; in Thy hand is good. Verily, Thou art mighty over all. Thou dost turn night to day, and dost turn day to night, and dost bring forth the living from the dead, and dost provide for whom Thou pleasest without taking count.

The throne of the Eternal 'stretcheth over heaven and earth, and the protection of them both is no burden to Him.'[2] The Divine Will is laid upon all.

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 133–5.
[2] Qurân, Sûra of the Cow.

All evil, no less than all good, proceeds from the eternal will of God. The decrees of *kismet* or fate rule all; from them there is no appeal, as there is no possibility of offering resistance.[1]

The missionaries of Islam affirmed that 'there existed a Sultan in the sky, a God, sovereign in His right as Creator, unbound even by His own character, who out of pure will sent these to heaven and those to hell, who was Fate as well as God.'[2]

Yet despite this firm belief in God and in a future life where virtue will be rewarded and vice punished, Mohammedanism makes man a puppet in the hands of an omnipotent Providence. Its belief that every man's fate was bound round his neck[3] destroyed the motives to progress and undermined national life. Islam is thus fettered by its creed. Earl Cromer says—

> Christian nations are bound to advance, but Mohammedanism has blocked its own road towards higher things. His view of Providence as Fate comes out in his worship. The Moslem generally utters certain set formulae of adoration; he rarely prays for specific objects.[4]

That is the verdict of a practical administrator who has watched Mohammedanism at work. It is supported by one of our greatest theologians.

[1] Geden, *Studies in Comparative Religion*, p. 268.
[2] Townsend, *Asia and Europe*, p. 49.
[3] Sûra xvii. 14.
[4] Lord Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, ii. 145, 229.

The tendency of Mohammed's monotheism was to emphasize exclusively the infinitude of the gulf between the Creator and His creatures, without any adequate recognition of their correlation. The Creator is regarded simply in His transcendence, as the Author of absolute decrees; and the creature remains in all his creaturely infirmity. There is no mediator between the two, nor anything analogous to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling presence is a perpetual principle of progressive development. No such injunction, therefore, as 'Be ye perfect,' no presentation of an absolute standard, is possible. Morality remains relative and stereotyped in its relativity, with no higher sanction than that of ultimate rewards and punishments of a purely relative and human type. There is thus no scope for that progressive development or realization of our personality, that attainment of reality through personal union with the absolute source of reality, which is alike the demand of reason and the promise of Christ.[1]

The Indian religions afford a wide field for the student of Providence. In the Veda, Indra, the lord of rain and thunderstorm, makes the earth fruitful by refreshing showers. One hymn in his praise speaks of him almost as the God of Providence.

O Indra, a thousand have been thy helps accorded to us, a thousand, O driver of the bays, have been thy most delightful viands. May thousands of treasures richly to enjoy, may goods come to us a thousandfold.

Varuna is praised in words which almost echo the 139th Psalm.

[1] Illingworth, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, pp. 185–6.

The Mighty Varuna, who rules above, looks down
Upon these worlds, his kingdom, as if close at hand.
When men imagine they do aught by stealth, he knows it.
No one can stand or walk or softly glide along
Or hide in dark recess, or lurk in secret cell,
But Varuna detects him and his movements spies.
Two persons may devise some plot, together sitting
In private and alone; but he, the king, is there—
A third, and sees it all.[1]

This is Providence as seen in the sacred books of Hinduism. But the doctrine of transmigration practically denies Providence.

If it leaves God at all to the world, as Hindus would insist that it does, it leaves Him only as a distant, silent, uninterfering and practically uninterested Observer of the processes which, perchance, He instituted, but which He has no power either to change or arrest.[2]

The Vedantist's aspiration is to be 'one with Brahma.' He has no real object of religious affection, no Being to whom he can pray.[3] There is no room for Providence here.

The Hinduism of the villages of India to-day is described by Sir Monier Williams as demonophobia.

They are haunted and oppressed by a perpetual dread of demons. They are firmly convinced that evil spirits of all kinds, from malignant fiends to merely mischievous imps and elves, are ever on the watch to harm, harass,

[1] Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 16.
[2] Haigh, *Some Leading Ideas of Hinduism*, p. 27.
[3] Ibid., pp. 80, 123.

and torment them, to cause plague, sickness, famine and disaster, to impede, injure, and mar every good work.[1]

In some villages in the South of India no hut is permitted to have its door facing towards the south, lest it should facilitate the entrance of a demon. Every tree, every rock, every stream, the very winds themselves have their appropriate devil ; whose evil designs must if possible be turned aside by offerings. Moreover every village has its own tutelary deities, who watch over it and the fields of the peasants. Every house has its household gods.[2]

A constant round of religious observances is gone through by the Hindu to meet his obligations to some god or other, or to avert the wrath of some demon. No gracious light of Providence shines upon these troubled lives.

Buddhism has no Divine Providence. 'Buddhists deny the existence of a personal God.'[3] They believe 'in no god or gods whatever as a personal motive power.'[4] Man is his own providence. He must save himself. All that even Buddha can do is to enlighten him as to the true path of knowledge. He bade his disciples 'Be ye a lamp unto yourselves; be ye a refuge to yourselves; look not for refuge to any but yourselves.' That was the matured philosophy of Buddha's old age.

Fichte's idea of moral order as deity had a curious

[1] *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 210.
[2] Geden, *Studies in Eastern Religions*, p. 172.
[3] *The Japanese Spirit*, p. 57.
[4] Ibid., p. 74.

kinship with Buddha's *kharma*, which represented the inexorable concatenation of act and result, merit and reward, demerit and penalty. Will, then, as the Ego in action, became the chief factor of life, its qualities and the order within which it was lived ; in other words, it was the Providence that governed the lives of men.[1]

As to the beliefs of China, Dr. Legge says that in the writings of its older sages Te or Shang Te appears

as a personal being, ruling in heaven and on earth, the author of man's moral nature, the governor among the nations, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the bad. Confucius preferred to speak of Heaven. . . . Not once throughout the Analects (the collected Sayings of Confucius) does he use the personal name. I would say that he was unreligious rather than irreligious ; yet by the coldness of his temperament and intellect in this matter, his influence is unfavourable to the development of true religious feeling among the Chinese people generally, and he prepared the way for the speculations of the literati of mediaeval and modern times, which have exposed them to the charge of Atheism.[2]

Confucius taught that man is master of his own destiny, and is the equal of heaven and earth. Heaven has laid down certain laws, and if man obeys these all the blessings which Heaven has to give are his right.

[1] Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 123.
[2] *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, pp. 100–1.

Heaven both governs the weather and looks after man's actions, for 'every day heaven witnesses our actions and is present in the places where we are'; these two aspects of Providence are clearly kindred, and are in fact the same.[1]

Prayer is offered for worldly benefits, and sacrifices are the means of procuring them.[2]

Some few passages in the Confucian Analects and elsewhere invest Heaven with more of the character of a personal god. . . . But the preponderating evidence goes to show that Heaven is but the equivalent of Providence, which orders but does not direct.[3]

In the crudest forms of religion of which we have any intimate knowledge God was identified with the elements and powers of Nature. Inanimate things were endowed with life and regarded as able to injure or help men.

Reverence for the supreme brilliance of the sky (Uranus = Varuna), or for the sun in his strength, and the moon walking in brightness, . . . are among the oldest inheritances of Indo-Germanic peoples.[4]

Wordsworth had such views in mind when he wrote—

> Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

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[1] Menzies, *History of Religion*, pp. 109–10.
[2] Ibid., p. 113.
[3] R. K. Douglas, *Confucianism and Taoism*, pp. 78–9.
[4] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 44.

As Christianity spread among our Saxon forefathers, Fate ceased to be regarded as the blind force which made even the gods bend before it. 'God is to us eternal; the decrees of Wyrd change not Him.' Wyrd became 'almost synonymous with Providence, the power through which God works, even God Himself, almost the Grace of God.'[1]

We may take one illustration of these crude beliefs from the religion of Peru and Mexico. Mr. Payne, in his *History of the New World called America*, says that the idea of the enfeeblement of the gods and spirits by age, of the gradual decay of their powers, largely underlies the theology of the New World. The gods were liable to death by starvation, to extinction by old age, which had 'to be averted by making new images of them each year carefully moulded of the cooked paste of maize, mingled with the blood of sacrifices. The intention of these singular effigies was to warn the gods to renew their vitality; to remind them of the human blood which had been shed for their nourishment; to urge them to the performance of their part in the contract or covenant between the gods and their worshippers.'

The gods of Peru are essentially mortal, and need the providential care of their worshippers. They belong to the community. 'They are in it and of it; they are its most important members.' They had their own herds of llamas and pacos, whose flesh was consumed

[1] Dale, *National Life in Early English Literature*, pp. 109–10.

on their altars and whose wool was woven into the finest cloth to provide raiment for the images of the gods, or for the use of those who served them.[1] Every calamity which befalls man is ascribed to some breach of his covenant with the gods. If the dues of the gods are withheld the defaulter is punished. 'His crops fail; his hoards decay; he is stricken with disease.'[2]

The sun held a special place in the worship of both Peru and Mexico. The Peruvian Incas, 'people of the sun,' did not claim to be descended from the sun, but the name was a title of honour. In Mexico it was held that the sun alone stood between the earth and its destruction. It was regarded as an animal which drank up the water and sucked up solid things. Its appetites were thus to be satisfied by those who depended on it for ripening their harvests.[3]

Wesley carefully availed himself when in Georgia of every opportunity to study the religion of the North American Indians. A Chicasaw chief when asked, 'Why do you think the Beloved Ones take care of *you?*' answered without hesitation—

> I was in the battle with the French; and the bullet went on this side, and the bullet went on that side; and this man died, and that man died; but I am alive still; and by this I know that the Beloved Ones take care of me.[4]

[1] Payne, *History of the New World called America*, i. p. 437.
[2] Ibid., p. 442.
[3] Ibid., pp. 499, 522.
[4] *Works*, vi. 313.

This survey of the beliefs in Providence outside Bible circles reveals a universal yearning after divine help and favour, and bears witness to the truth which was grasped by nations outside the Jewish and the Christian pale. It signally illustrates the craving for fuller knowledge of the will of God concerning man and his life on earth. For that we must turn to the revelation of His love and grace in the Scriptures. We do not ignore or depreciate the knowledge reached by less favoured races.

In the wildest aberrations of the religious consciousness there is yet a groping after the supreme, a craving desire to realize what is more and mightier than man, and to find a support whereon his weakness may rely.[1]

The noble thoughts of the great writers of Greece show 'the working of the same spirit whose fullness is in Christ,' and the religious life of Egypt and of India points in the same direction.[2] Providence is at work everywhere in this domain of national religions, and is manifestly leading men of all races towards that goal of which our Lord had His vision in His mediatorial prayer (John xvii.).

Perverted as other religions may be in greater or less degree through the presence of evil which affects everything human, I have yet no doubt that they too enter into the great providential order of which Christianity forms the climax.[3]

[1] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 2.
[2] Ibid., p. 383.
[3] Dr. Sanday, *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, p. 181.

V

THE GOD OF PROVIDENCE

Scripture is the history of God.—Quoted in Wesley's *Works*, vi. 314.

Human nature cries aloud for a living God who gives us some assurance of His love, a God at whose feet we may find our true self in a knowledge which is life and a service which is perfect freedom. —Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 244.

This truth—God a moral Governor—placed in the forefront, will help us to grasp firmly at the outset an ethical conception of Providence as concerned supremely, not for the happiness of sentient creatures, but for the reign of righteousness.—Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 172.

'What *I* can't understand,' said Dan, 'is how Maximus knew all about the Picts when he was over in Gaul.' 'He who makes himself Emperor anywhere must know everything, everywhere,' said Parnesius [who had been a centurion of the seventh cohort of the 30th Legion]. 'We had this much from Maximus's mouth after the Games.'—Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, p. 196.

O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth: We humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Man's views of Providence shaped by his conception of God	83
Can the scheme of Providence be trusted to His hands?	84
The greatness of the task shown by some human analogies	85
The God of Providence worthy of entire confidence	85
Immanent yet transcendent	86
Science corroborates this view	87
Omnipotent yet not unconditioned	88
Prince Hohenlohe's thought	90
The wisdom of the God of Providence	91
A Being of perfect faithfulness and justice	92
God's goodwill to man manifest in small things as well as great	93
Tennyson's trust in the God of Providence	94
The God of Providence revealed in Christ	95
God's obedience to the law of sacrifice	97
His minute personal care of His creatures	98
No limit to the Divine activities	98
A God to be trusted and loved	99

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V

THE doctrine of Divine Providence which any one holds is shaped by his conception of God. A study of non-Christian religions shows that they failed to rise above their beliefs as to their divinities. When the god was regarded as revengeful or greedy of pleasure and honour, the worshipper lost faith in heavenly guidance or succour. Bias of Priene in Ionia, the last of the seven sages of Greece, warned a godless crew who were praying for protection in the storm 'to be silent lest the gods should discover that they were at sea.' As though the gods did not already know where they were, or were bent on revenge, and could not find means to assert their honour and punish wickedness on shore!

Faith in Providence, then, is the fruit of knowledge of God. Is He equal to the strain which the doctrine puts upon Him? Are the divine resources adequate for carrying on this world-wide, age-long scheme? These are questions which demand an answer. That answer will not only be the measure of our faith, but will fix the contribution we are disposed to make towards accomplishing the scheme of Providence. If

our study leads to the settled conviction that it is possible to co-operate with God and to work out His plans, if we are convinced that this is the way to secure the highest and most abiding results, we shall have courage for every task assigned us.

It is almost presumption to inquire into God's fitness for His providential rule. But both the fortieth of Isaiah and the Sermon on the Mount encourage such investigation. That point must be clear if faith is to triumph in the presence of things which appear to make it impossible. Of some of these things we cannot hope to receive a complete explanation in this world. Many problems and enterprises of Divine Providence require more than a lifetime to work them out. Can we leave them safely in its hands?

That question can only be answered when we have reached some definite knowledge of God. We are thus led to study His character and His dealings with men.

> The doctrine of Providence brings into theology the attributes of God generally. If we give all the revealed divine perfections their equal homage, Providence is no other than the purpose of infinite love using with Almighty Power the means which unfailing wisdom ordains.[1]

We approach this problem in the light of experience gained in the modest realm of human providence. A father's toil for his wife and children, a mother's sacrifice and watchful love, open our eyes to the love

[1] Pope, *Compendium of Theology*, p. 191.

of God. The Bible does not overlook those analogies. 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' says the psalmist (ciii. 13). 'As one whom his mother comforteth,' says the prophet (Isa. lxvi. 13). Other analogies may be drawn from the wisdom and resource needed to conduct a business or to fill any responsible office. The burden that rests on the shoulders of one who has to wear a crown or control the destinies of an empire may also throw light on the tasks and problems which any worthy theory of Providence lays on God. Alfred's enduring fame shows the gratitude of a nation for a wise, enlightened, and self-sacrificing ruler. Holland is still full of memories of the heroic service of William the Silent, and our own Queen Victoria laid her empire under an abiding debt by her devotion to her people.

What conception, then, must we form of the God of Providence? Here is an impressive answer.

> When I speak of God, I mean a personal Being above us and not below us, a Being to whose greatness religion pointed from the first, and in whose goodness it has more and more in the course of ages found its final rest and peace.[1]

The whole body of evidence, drawn from Nature and from the constitution of man, leads us with increasing assurance to the conclusion that the God of Providence is worthy of the entire confidence of His creatures.

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 9.

Every argument which goes to verify our assumption as regards the bare existence of God goes equally to prove that He is a God of a certain character, so that each as it is accepted compels us to say something definite about Him. Thus if He is the final cause of all causes, He must have power to be a sufficient cause. If He is the ultimate origin of life and personality, He must have life and personality Himself. If He has given us a moral sense, He must Himself be its concrete embodiment. An agnostic attitude at this point is not even decently self-consistent.[1]

The Old Testament represents God as present throughout His creation. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' saith the Lord (Jer. xxiii. 24). He is in all, but above all. There is no room for Pantheism here. Judaism,

while emphatically asserting God's transcendence, combines it with a sense of His spiritual nearness to mankind, and providential government of the world; but it did not develop this into a general doctrine of divine immanence. That doctrine, on the other hand, was prominent in the Indian and Stoic philosophies; but in a form which always tended to pantheism, even if it was not in all cases thoroughly pantheistic.[2]

If God is to be the helper of man, He must be apart from man and above him. Our doctrine of Providence is emptied of significance if the divine existence is merged in our own. God must be 'personal and sovereign and complete in Himself.'[3]

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 19.
[2] Illingworth, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 200.
[3] Gore, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, p. 48.

Thus however much stress we lay upon God's immanence, or intimate presence in the world, and inspiring guidance of the minds of men; this immanence gains its whole significance and character from the fact that it is the immanence of the Transcendent One, the Eternal, the All-Holy, the Almighty.[1]

As Lord and Ruler of the universe God guides all things according to His own will for the accomplishment of His gracious designs. Thomas Aquinas says—

God is in all things, not as part of their essence, nor yet as an accident or attribute, but as an agent is present to that on which it acts. Everything must be conjoined to that on which it immediately acts.[2]

Science has set its seal to this doctrine which lies at the foundation of our belief in Divine Providence.

If evolution points to a God at all, it points to a God immanent in the world, however He may also transcend it—immanent as a living and formative power, and working as directly in the commonest of natural processes as in the mightiest of marvels. A God who sometimes and only sometimes works in it is unthinkable.[3]

The first test of God's fitness to fill the throne of Providence lies in His ability to sustain that load. The might needed for such a task must be absolute and absolutely unchanging. Is the divine power adequate for the vast and never-ceasing claims that

[1] Illingworth, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, pp. 199–200.
[2] Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 236.
[3] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 80.

are made upon it? The answer surely is that the God who made the world is able to sustain and direct it. The fortieth chapter of Isaiah is a wonderful development of that argument. All fear is banished, all help is assured by the fact that 'the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary' (Isa. xl. 28). Science has added to the marvel by its doctrine of evolution, with its constantly unfolding miracle of wise adaptation to all the changing needs of Nature and of man.

We believe, then, in a God of Providence who is Omnipotent, Almighty. The presence of evil in the world makes it necessary to guard this attribute against misconception. 'The word Almighty represented an idea not present to the mind of antiquity. Any approach towards it was unwelcome.'[1]

The Greek mind shrank from the conception of the Infinite, but in the Hebrew Scriptures the idea of Almighty Love is so familiar that there is no intellectual difficulty as to the problem of evil. Man's rebellion against God explains it fully.

The problem of evil never troubled the Greek, and was solved for the Jew; but in the Christian era thoughtful men soon began to be exercised sorely by it. How were they to reconcile God's omnipotence with the fact that evil darkened His world? The theological master of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, says that 'Omnipotence is the power to do whatever

[1] Wedgwood, *The Moral Ideal*, pp. 361–2.

does not involve a contradiction. But of this last it is more true to say that it cannot be done than that God cannot do it.'[1]

A keen thinker maintains that half the difficulties which lie in the way of faith in a Personal God as the Ruler as well as the Creator of the world are 'wholly gratuitous.'

They arise out of the inconsiderate and unwarranted use of a single word—Omnipotent. Thoughtful minds in all ages have experienced the most painful perplexities in the attempt to reconcile certain of the moral and physical phenomena which we see around us with the assumption of a Supreme Being at once All-wise, All-good, and Almighty. The mental history of mankind presents few sadder spectacles than is afforded by the acrobatic efforts, the convulsive contortions, the almost incredible feats of subtlety and force, performed by piety and intelligence combined, in this self-imposed field of conflict—this torture-chamber of the soul.

We have only to conceive the Creator

conditioned—hampered, it may be, by the attributes, qualities, imperfections of the material on which He had to operate; bound possibly by laws or properties inherent in the nature of that material, . . . and it becomes possible to believe in and to worship God without doing violence to our moral sense, or denying or distorting the sorrowful facts that surround our daily life.[2]

It may be urged that God has power to bar out

[1] Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 236.
[2] Greg, *Enigmas of Life and Character*, xvi., xix.

imperfections from His world; but this overlooks the fact that He has seen good to work on certain lines.

It is vain, therefore, to appeal to the almightiness of God, unless you mean to throw away the relations of an established universe, and pass into His unconditioned infinitude. In the cosmos He has abnegated it; and there is a limit for what you may demand from it as within its compass.[1]

These subjects appeal strongly to devout and inquiring minds. We have a significant instance of this in a letter by Prince Hohenlohe, dated Paris, July 16, 1876. It is found in the midst of notices of interviews with Thiers and Gambetta and all the crowded events of an ambassador's life. It suggests that in some respects God, for the purpose of training His creatures, deliberately limits the display of His own powers in order that man may exercise free will and work out his own plans in the world.

I am pursued by a thought which I cannot shake off. It is this. May not the incredulity of our age have arisen from the fact that the philosophers have been as mistaken as the theologians in their manner of setting up the idea of God? The deistic philosophers do not satisfy us with their definition of the Godhead, because, like the theologians, they attribute to the Godhead properties which are opposed to reason. Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and so on, lead to nonsense. The all-ruling, all-pervading unity, the divine as the substance of all things (according to Spinoza), is likewise an empty concept, the negation of the concept of

[1] Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii. 80.

God, who at any rate is one. This all-pervading unity as the divine substance need not be denied, but it is not the God of Deism, and may subsist side by side with Him. (The concept of the personal God should not be carried too far.) Why should it not be possible that just as consciousness forms itself in the human brain, so at some point of the universe, and in special relation with it, a consciousness should be formed, standing in the same relation to the said point of the universe as the human soul does to the body? Thus we should have as God a personality limited in its manifestations, subordinated to the powers of Nature, but none the less venerable. Lindau says this brings us to the Jehovah of the Jews. Why not?

The God of Providence must be endowed with wisdom to carry out its whole complex scheme. Nothing less than unerring wisdom will suffice. Modern invention has made us painfully familiar with the catastrophes which await any lapse in the brain-power of those who have to guide the giant forces of steam and electricity. Hundreds of lives are in the hands of a single man; if his nerve or skill fail all may be sacrificed. We must be assured of the divine wisdom if we are to reach a living faith in Providence. Isaiah has no hesitation here. 'There is no searching of His understanding' (xl. 28). God's wisdom must be that of perfect vision. He must be aware of all contingencies, awake to all necessities that may arise. He must know His instruments and know how to use them. He must grasp every situation with all its issues. That is implied in the assurance of Hanani:

'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.'

Our study of the attributes of the God of Providence reaches a vital point when we inquire which side He is on in the fight against evil. Can He be depended upon as the unswerving ally of truth and goodness? James Hinton speaks of the horror that once fell upon him when he fancied that some of the principles of the Bible seemed opposed to justice and truth. For a moment he felt all his foundations shaken. 'But an unjust God! Oh, I can conceive somewhat of what the universe would feel if God were wicked.'[1] We have seen how that crisis came to many thinkers in Greece when Xenophanes turned the religion of his time into ridicule. Religion received its death-blow through that 'collision between an immoral religious conception of God and a morality which is becoming conscious of its own strength.'[2] In Israel the

claim of morality for God precluded the possibility of such a collision as took place in the history of the Greeks. The progressive development of morals in the Old Testament, and the gradual unfolding of a perfect character, was also for Israel a progressive revelation of the character of God. Step by step the religious idea advanced with moral progress. And, as they advance, the contrast with other religions becomes more marked.[3]

The God of Providence, then, must be a Being of

[1] *Life*, p. 31. [2] *Lux Mundi*, p. 70.
[3] Ibid., p. 73.

perfect fidelity and perfect justice. 'A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He' (Deut. xxxii. 4). That is the Hebrew conception. Matthew Arnold says—

> The real germ of religious consciousness, out of which sprang Israel's name for God, to which the records of His history adapted themselves, and which came to be clothed upon, in time, with a mighty growth of poetry and tradition, was a consciousness of the not ourselves which makes for righteousness.[1]

Another question must be faced. Is God's care for the world so deep and abiding as to lead Him to undertake the tasks involved by His providential rule, and to continue to fulfil them despite every hindrance that human sin and folly put in His way? That is perhaps the vital question in this study of the God of Providence. Many who would not dream of questioning the divine power or wisdom wonder whether the affairs of the world and the interests of individual lives in particular are not too insignificant to engage the thought and care of the Divine Being.

It would be fatal to our peace if we could not give a satisfactory answer. 'God's goodness is the measure of His Providence.' He must have the well-being of every creature at heart, and be as ready to care for the smallest as the greatest. 'This is the glory of the Scriptural teaching, that it knows nothing of a divine

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 53.

general care which does not descend to the minutest particulars.'[1]

The heresy which limits the divine love and care must be uprooted before God's people can be comforted. 'Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed away from my God?' (Isa. xl. 27).

The worst fallacy is the assumption that God cares only for great things. A more unscientific position could hardly be imagined. There is no careless work in Nature. A gnat is made as accurately as a man, a microscopic *Heliopelta* turned as skilfully as a watch-case. If there is a God at all things like these must be His doing, by whatever laws He does them. And if the evidence is overwhelming that the minute things of the earth are not beneath His attention, we cannot assume that the earth itself and man are in such sense insignificant as to make it likely beforehand that He is too full of other work to give a revelation. This difficulty at all events is imaginary.[2]

A beautiful little incident of Tennyson's last days shows how he rested in the care of God. His son says—

A week before his death I was sitting by him, and he talked long of the personality and love of God, 'that God whose eyes consider the poor,' 'who catereth even for the sparrow.'[3] 'I should,' he said, 'infinitely rather feel myself

[1] Pope, *Compendium*, p. 191.

[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 26.

[3] 'Yet providently caters for the sparrow.'—*As You Like It*, ii. 3. 44.

the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth with a God above, than the highest type of man standing alone.'[1]

We judge the character of the God of Providence by the designs which He pursues and the road by which He reaches them. Man's highest good must be combined with God's greatest glory. We must feel that we are pitied and helped. 'A God who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities is lower than a dog who can.'[2]

The Old Testament has many revelations of the pity and the mercy of Jehovah. But it is in Jesus Christ that we behold the God of Providence in His perfect grace and goodness. He linked Himself to our race, and His links to it can never be broken whilst He is partaker of human nature. The knowledge of man which the Redeemer gained by sharing human flesh, by submitting to human infirmities and temptations, by dying a human death—that is our sheet-anchor in this doctrine of Providence. Macaulay put it nobly—

God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue,

[1] *Tennyson's Life*, i. 311.
[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 203.

and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the lictors, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.[1]

That was the triumph of the Incarnation, and it is still the way by which the doctrine of Divine Providence is brought most surely home to the heart of the world.

Our Lord's teaching on Providence is given in the clearest and most attractive form in the Sermon on the Mount. God's relation to man is that of a Father. He appeals to His disciples to take the path of love and gentleness. 'That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He rebukes anxious care by the thought: 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things' (Matt. v. 45; vi. 32). He teaches us to pray, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' The riches here are inexhaustible.

Take the simple text, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered' (Matt. x. 29). Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, the greatest natural attributes, so-called, of God are there; for God fulfils the obligations which He has imposed upon Himself as Creator by ordering the life of the humblest creatures which He has made. And all these attributes act in the service of a love which transcends and suffuses them all. The whole, therefore, of formal

[1] Macaulay's *Essay on Milton.*

theology as to the nature and attributes of God is contained in this testimony of Christ to His providential care.'[1]

The Christian doctrine of Providence is richer even than that set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. God's interest in man is shown by the sacrifices He has made on his behalf.

It would crown the Apology of Providence if we could conceive God, not merely as an onlooker, but as a participator in the vicarious suffering by which the world is redeemed and regenerated.[2]

'Progress by Sacrifice' is manifest most of all in that crowning grace of Providence—the Living and Dying of the only-begotten Son. That answers all questionings as to God's interest in man and the length to which it will lead Him along the road of sacrifice. St. Paul has a mighty rebuke for all fear: 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?' (Rom. viii. 32).

The apostle's great word about the groaning creation and the Spirit who 'maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered' (Rom. viii. 26), 'shows the whole suffering world of God's creation to be groaning as with travail pains, and the eternal Spirit Himself to be in sympathetic emotions of unspeakable affection.'[3]

[1] Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*, p. 108.
[2] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 369; see also pp. 371–5.
[3] Dr. Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 574.

Here is a fellowship in sorrow and in intercession which is sure proof that we are not left alone.

As we study God's relation to His world thus set forth in the Old Testament and the New, the assurance of His providential care becomes invincible. The links which bind the world to Him are too close and tender to leave room for doubt as to His infinite and never-failing love for His children.

The vision of the God of Providence is the frontispiece to the Book which recounts the never-ending story of His faithfulness, His love, His power, His wisdom.

His minute personal care extends to every sparrow and to the cattle on a thousand hills; how much more must He care for man who exists in His own image! For the most ignorant and degraded savage is of more value than all birds and cattle, and no nation or tribe of men has been left without the witness of His fatherly concern. Moreover, each individual receives as minute attention as if there were no other in the world. . . . For each and for all of these alike the everlasting Father cares with unspeakable tenderness, and makes all things work together for their good. He is at once the abiding and faithful Sustainer, Preserver, and Ruler. Our heavenly Father is in love with all His world, not willing that any should perish.[1]

God's activities are subject to none of those limitations to which human service must submit. There is no question here of a single lifetime. John Wesley never penned a nobler or more inspiring sentence than

[1] Dr. Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 574.

that written to Mrs. Pendarves, on August 12, 1731, long before his evangelical conversion. 'But I know no danger that a lover of God can be in, till God is no more, or at least has quitted the reins, and left chance to govern the world.'

Divine Providence is an abiding and unfolding revelation of God. It supplements the knowledge drawn from reason and revelation; it also unfolds it and applies it. This evidence increases in volume as our life advances; it is continually enriched by the new proofs we find in surveying the history of the Church and the world. Deism is no longer a living faith.

The centre of religious interest has moved. Those who seek God seek for witnesses of Him in the bountiful earth and the broad sky, and in the widening marvel of human history. Many believe that all that is, and has been, and is yet to come is not too vast to reveal Him. To manifest Himself He requires not only the single human life, but every life in all the vast context of its antecedents and consequences.[1]

The conclusion may be expressed in the words of two modern thinkers.

The only God whom Western Europeans, with a Christian ancestry of a thousand years behind them, can worship, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or rather, of St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Bernard, and of the innumerable 'blessed saints,' canonized or not, who peopled the ages of faith.[2]

[1] 'Divine Immanence,' Prof. Henry Jones, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1907, p. 748.

[2] Morison, *Service of Man*, p. 48.

That is the God of grace and providence in whom our fathers trusted. The last witness shows that the revelation of the Trinity is the sheet-anchor of a reasonable and all-sustaining faith in Providence.

What we need is something that will assure us of God's love, so that we may no longer be fretted by the facts that seem to deny it. It is Christianity alone that gives us this assurance. Its doctrine of the Trinity secures the possibility of ethical relations in God's own being. If it teaches that God's moral nature is love, it shows how this can be, since the circle of the Godhead includes the lover and the loved.[1]

[1] Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. 147.

VI

THE MAN OF PROVIDENCE

My Lord, it is both your honour and interest to be ὅλως τοῦ κρειττόνος, the entire and devoted servant of Providence.—FLAVEL'S Dedication.

Many such simple enthusiasts have been the instruments of Providence.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.
DRYDEN, *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day.*

Man is neither the master nor the slave of Nature; he is its interpreter and living word. Man consummates the universe, and gives a voice to the mute creation.—EDGAR QUINET.

Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made their cause my own.
They should ward off fate's envy;—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.
BROWNING, *Paracelsus*, ii. p. 30 (ed. 1888).

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Man's part in the plans of Divine Providence	103
Celsus denied that all things were made for man	104
Science confirms the Scripture view	105
Dr. Ray Lankester on the Kingdom of Man	106
The Dean of Westminster's Summary	106
Man's brain fits him to control Nature	108
Is man a free agent?	109
Difficulty of reconciling human freedom and divine sovereignty	110
Self-determinism	110
Man responsible for his gifts to the God of Providence	112
Personal contributions to the work	113
Dangers of abuse	114
Providential opportunities	115
Queen Victoria's sense of a providential vocation	116
Providential men	117
Lord Acton on memorable lives	118
Faith grows as we watch God's chosen instruments	119
England's great men	120
The law of sacrifice in men of Providence	121
The humbler instruments of Providence	122
Man trained for his part	123
Need of imagination and sympathy	124
A glorious field for the man of Providence	124
Theodoret's closing words	126

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VI

THE human agent plays a large part in the working out of God's providential design, and that part is constantly growing more important. Man is the chief instrument for accomplishing the purposes of Divine Providence. In him the Bible story of Creation culminates. The world is made ready for its human master, who takes his place as lord at the express command of God. His title-deeds are put into his hands by his Maker. 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Gen. i. 28). The noble psalm which describes with such force and beauty man's place in the universe meditates upon these things with surprise and gratitude. The sight of man as God's under-Providence, the human administrator ruling the kingdom entrusted to him, is overwhelming.

> When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
> The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained;
> What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
> And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

For Thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet:
All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field,
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Ps. viii. 3–8).

The position thus assigned to man in the universe has not been undisputed. In the second century Celsus, in his attack on the faith and morals of Christians, blames them 'for asserting that God made all things for the sake of man. Because from the history of animals, and from the sagacity manifested by them, he would show that all things come into existence not more for the sake of man than of the irrational animals.'

Origen answers that 'God provides in a special manner for rational creatures; while this also follows, that irrational creatures enjoy the benefit of what is done for man.' Haeckel agrees with Celsus. He holds that

the antiquated fable of the wise scheme whereby the Creator's hand ordered all things in wisdom and understanding is completely refuted. Human vanity and human pride, since the awakening of human consciousness, have got into the way of regarding Man as the peculiar object and end of all life on earth, as the central point of earth's being, for whose use and service all the other activities of Nature have from the beginning been determined or predestinated by a wise Providence.[1]

[1] *Anthropogeny*, p. 88.

But Science is against the sceptic. If it 'has firmly linked our body to the beasts that perish, anti-Christian thought itself at times has donned the prophet's mantle, discoursing of our true affinity and likeness to the mysterious force which works behind the veil of Isis which no mortal has lifted yet.'[1]

The scientific revelations of the last century have shown with increasing force and confidence that man crowns the whole process of creation and evolution. Darwin writes to Dr. Asa Gray: 'If anything is designed, certainly man must be; one's "inner consciousness" (though a false guide) tells one so.'[2] Man is in truth the greatest of all miracles. Macaulay justly describes him as 'the machine of machines, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and the Arkwrights are worthless.'[3]

The great historian is corroborated by the theologian. Dr. Illingworth says—

> We have grown so familiar with our own human nature, that we are apt to think we know more about it than we really do. Hence men often take it for granted that to explain religion as a human invention or to prove the life of Christ to be merely human, is to abolish its mystery and translate it into a language that we fully understand; whereas in fact the life of man, with its unknown origin and unknown destiny, its high capacities and tragic failures, its infinite aspirations and infinitesimal achievements, its

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 7.
[2] *Life and Letters*, ii. 382.
[3] Speech on the Ten Hours' Bill.

strange intermixture of grandeur and meanness, of sanctity and sin, is the greatest mystery within our experience. *Grande profundum est homo*, and to say that a thing is human is to say that it is mysterious.[1]

Man's powers of body and mind fit him not only to seek his own health and life but to rule over the lower creatures. The world, excellently planned and adapted in every part, is entrusted largely to the rule of human providence. Man's place in the cosmos is clear. Dr. Ray Lankester says—

It has become more and more a matter of conviction to me—and I believe that I share that conviction with a large body of fellow students both in this country and other civilized states—that the time has arrived when the true relation of Nature to Man has been so clearly ascertained that it should be more generally known than is at present the case, and that this knowledge should form far more largely than it does at this moment the object of human activity and endeavour—that it should be, in fact, the guide of state government, the trusted basis of the development of human communities.[2]

Man, then, is the centre of the universe, the visible head of creation, in vital touch with all its processes. His dignity rests on his relation to Nature.[3] The Dean of Westminster put this forcibly in a sermon preached before the London University.

[1] Illingworth, *The Trinity*, p. 19.
[2] *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 1.
[3] See Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*, pp. 85, 273.

That Man—perfectly realized humanity—should be thus central to the scheme of our universe, the ultimate issue, the final cause of its evolution, is a conception which in various shapes has always offered itself to thinkers who in any age have asked for the meaning of things as a whole. The Greek dictum, ἄνθρωπος μέτρον πάντων, 'Man is the measure of all,' the Hebrew inspiration, 'In the image of God made He man,' with the promise, 'Let them have dominion,' alike prepare the way for the Christian faith of the Incarnation crowned by the Resurrection and the Ascension, placing the Son of Man for ever on the right hand of God. It is the conviction of thoughtful Christians that every new access of knowledge which analyses and reveals the method of the universal process, in such regions as biology, psychology, history, contributes its quota of justification to the belief that, so far as the present system of the universe extends—and beyond it we are not qualified to range—the perfecting of man in Christ is the purpose of God with His world. And this it is which, under the symbolism of the Ascension, is offered to us as our hope.[1]

Professor Ray Lankester thus sums up the process of evolution—

The consensus is complete. Man is held to be a part of Nature, a product of the definite and orderly evolution which is universal; a being resulting from and driven by the one great nexus of mechanism which we call Nature. He stands alone, face to face with that relentless mechanism. It is his duty to understand and to control it.[2]

Some thinkers who accept this conclusion 'seek to belittle man.' Others do not fail to recognize

[1] *Guardian*, May 15, 1907.
[2] *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 7.

that 'Man stands apart from and above all natural products, whether animate or inanimate.'[1] Compared with other animals man's brain is enormous in size, and has a corresponding increase in its activities and capacity.

It appears that the increased bulk of cerebral substance means increased 'educability'—an increased power of storing up individual experience—which tends to take the place of the inherited mechanism with which it is often in antagonism. The power of profiting by individual experience, in fact educability, must in conditions of close competition be, when other conditions are equal, an immense advantage to its possessor.[2]

His mental qualities 'justify the view that Man forms a new departure in the gradual unfolding of Nature's predestined scheme. Knowledge, reason, self-consciousness, will, are the attributes of Man.'[3] That view is essential to Dr. Ray Lankester's argument that 'the knowledge and control of Nature is Man's destiny and his greatest need.'[4] He urges that to neglect to prepare future leaders of the community for this rôle is 'to retard the approach of well-being and happiness, and to injure humanity.'[5] Other masters of Science have shared this estimate of man. After referring to the theory that 'all the planets will in time grow too cold for life, unless indeed some

[1] *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 7.
[2] Ibid., p. 23.
[3] Ibid., p. 25.
[4] Ibid., p. 60.
[5] Ibid., p. 60.

great body dashes into the sun and thus gives it fresh life,' Darwin says—

> Believing, as I do, that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress. To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful.[1]

The psalmist's teaching is thus sustained by science. Man's vocation is to be a human copy and mirror of the Divine Providence. For that end he was made. He holds his place to work out God's plan for the whole creation.

One question must be faced. Is man a free agent of Providence, or is he the servant of inevitable law? Is he master of his actions or only the slave of his nature and circumstances? The question has been debated for ages. Fatalism has held sway over many lands and many religions. But it leaves no place for free will, whilst to moral action and rational action such free will is indispensable. Consciousness affirms that free will exists, and conscience would have no significance if it did not. 'Take it away, and man is a mere machine. Every man knows that he decides his own action, and would not be a man if he did not.'[2]

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 312.
[2] Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 213.

The reconciliation of man's part with that of God is not always easy.

As a matter of history, the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man have not gone well together. One of the two ideas tends to exclude the other. Either God absorbs man in Pantheism, or man banishes God in Deism. Either man is wholly subject to some universal law, or he stands out in the godless isolation of that which is right in his own eyes. There is no escape from the dilemma, unless God and man are joined by some true affinity which destroys their mutual exclusiveness. Such an affinity is found by the philosophical doctrine that there is a spark of the divine in man; and it might have been worth while to ask whether the Christian doctrine of an incarnation does not put the philosophical in its strongest form, and if so, whether this may not be a presumption in its favour.'[1]

Philosophy and religion bear testimony, as Professor Gwatkin puts it, 'to the almost insuperable difficulty of finding room in the universe for God and man.' Yet a true doctrine of Providence knows nothing of such conflict. Divine power does not override its human instruments. Man's free will is not destroyed, but he is guided and instructed that he may become an intelligent and convinced ally of God.

Free will does not, of course, involve 'a motiveless nor a limitless will,'[2] but implies freedom to choose between various courses of action. The meaning is more exactly expressed by the term 'self-determinism,'

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 240–1.
[2] Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 192.

which takes due account of the motives which sway human action.

The nature of the material objects and laws by which human life is environed, the society of men whose presence and influence is only revealed to us through the senses, present to us the particular realities which, by forming the world of consciousness, condition the tasks and problems of the will.[1]

A clever Oxford tutor once said, 'Viewed from the outside one is forced to conclude that man is subject to Necessity, but viewed from the inside one is forced to believe that he has Free Will.'[2]

Dr. Newton Clarke puts it thus—

God has the power, to us mysterious, of guiding free beings from above their freedom, without interfering with it. The freedom of man is accompanied by a higher sovereignty of God over spirits. We know ourselves free, and yet find evidence of a plan in our life that is not our own. We may seek to explain it by assuming that God predestines our acts, binds our wills, and makes us mere instruments; but we need not. He is greater than we think, and the solution of the mystery of Providence is to be found in His greatness. Above the field of human freedom He exercises a sovereignty in which there is no constraint.

Evidence of this higher sovereignty meets us whenever we find our lives falling into line, and working out a purpose that we did not form or entertain. It appears

[1] Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*, p. 423, where there is a helpful discussion of the whole subject.

[2] Richard Robinson, Queen's College, Oxford, quoted in Wright's *Life of Walter Pater*, i. 241.

also in all working out of large and high ideas in human history. The 'power not ourselves that makes for righteousness' is no dream, but a glorious reality. Something is going forward in individual life, and in the movement of mankind at large, that men did not devise—something so truly in the nature of purpose as to be surely the work of mind; something that accords in character with the character of God; something that expresses and represents His higher Sovereignty. Men are not forced to work out this idea which is not their own; both individually and collectively they are as free in all their doing as if they fulfilled no meanings but their own. God rules them from above their freedom.

How far this higher sway of God extends we cannot at present know. Mystery remains in life, and we cannot fully interpret Providence till we view it from above this world. All Providence requires long time for its vindication, most of all this higher Providence. . . . Perhaps faith will ultimately see that God's guiding of men from above their freedom is perfect and universal, and that His limiting of Himself by creating free wills, though real, has not deprived Him of anything of the control to which His perfect goodness is entitled. But a faith so high, if it is ever to be attained, waits for greater light than the Christian world has yet perceived.[1]

The man of Providence, then, must recognize himself as a free agent of the God of Providence. His gifts and capacities are a trust. The Parable of the Talents is laden with meaning for us here. 'With all sublunary entities,' Carlyle says, 'this is the question of questions: What talent is born to you? How do

[1] *An Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 150-1.

you employ that?' Every talent is a bond to the heavenly Giver. The most scathing condemnation ever pronounced on a faithless servant of Divine Providence is that 'his great gifts were enhanced by great talents of which God gave him the use and the devil the application.'

It is not necessary that a man have brilliant gifts or supreme opportunities. One talent well used is as sure a passport to the favour of the gracious Master as two or five. No ambition is more cherished by those who have this deep sense of responsibility than that they may fill their part as worthily as possible. Prince Hohenlohe wrote to his brother the Cardinal, after he had resigned his position as Premier of Bavaria in 1870—

> In my breviary I have placed a passage cut from your letter, which I read every day. You say, 'Life in any case is nothing but a fight, and it is consoling to be able to say at the end of one's days, "I have fought a good fight."' I rejoice at your noble words every time I read them. Adieu.[1]

Every man is an ally of Divine Providence in working for his own highest good. 'God's Providence,' said Beecher, 'is on the side of clear heads.' One who has taken stock of his gifts and opportunities will see in what ways Providence expects him to cultivate his powers, and will labour to make the best of the stuff. He will also try to understand what personal

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 3.

contribution he is expected to make to the good of the world. Charles Wesley's gift was poetry, and he cultivated it even on his death-bed. John Wesley did not hesitate to advise Hannah More: 'Live in the world; that is your sphere of action.' He knew how that pure-hearted woman was influencing the upper classes, and he was anxious that she should not neglect her vocation. So did the Countess of Huntingdon fulfil her mission to the aristocratic circles of her day.

This sense of a providential call is not free from dangers. Philip the Second of Spain misread his vocation. He sent to Bishop Granvelle in 1560 the names and descriptions of those who were to be victims of the Inquisition in the Netherlands, and told him—

> There are but few of us left in the world who care for religion. 'Tis necessary, therefore, for us to take the greater heed for Christianity. We must lose our all, if need be, in order to do our duty; for in fine it is right that a man should do his duty.[1]

The human Providence must be fashioned on the lines of the divine. That is the safeguard against misuse of its powers. Its eye must be fixed on the Predominant Partner, consulting His will, copying His methods so far as they are models for man to copy. Above all, the man of Providence must be ready to obey orders. God holds the general plan. He fits each stone into the great Temple of Providence. Each

[1] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Part II. ch. ii.

life has an appointed place and service which it must be prepared to accept. Continual prayer for guidance befits those who would worthily fulfil their providential vocation. The man of Providence must also be quick to discern opportunities, and to use them to the best advantage. That was Nelson's chief claim to honour. 'I cannot be in the field of glory and be kept out of sight.' If every ally of Providence could truthfully say that he had never lost a chance of doing good and helping on God's cause, all things would wear a different aspect.

There are providential moments which we miss at our peril. The opportunity to make a contribution to the solution of some hard problem may only present itself once, and if it is lost many lives may be poorer. Wilberforce saw his path of service as soon as he had made his memorable decision for Christ. He said in 1786: 'God has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.' How nobly he rose to his vocation all the world bears witness. He was not blind also to the fact that, in the hands of Providence, his removal from the Methodist influences of his boyhood at Wimbledon was the means of his being connected with politicians and becoming useful in public life. Earl Shaftesbury is another outstanding example of the providential man seizing the providential moment with abiding results for the degraded and downtrodden.

The Editors of Queen Victoria's *Letters* point out

that the result of the parliamentary and municipal reforms of William IV's reign had been to give the middle classes a share in the government of the country,

and it was supremely fortunate that the Queen, by a providential gift of temperament, thoroughly understood the middle-class point of view. The two qualities of British middle-class life are common sense and family affection; and on these particular virtues the Queen's character was based; so that by a happy intuition she was able to interpret and express the spirit and temper of that class which, throughout her reign, was destined to hold the balance of political power in its hands. Behind lay a deep sense of religion, the religion which centres in the belief in the Fatherhood of God, and is impatient of dogmatic distinctions and subtleties.[1]

That is the verdict on a finished life. The path which led to such honour is revealed in the girl-queen's resolve—

Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country. I am very young, and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced; but I am sure that very few have more real good-will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have.[2]

Hero-worship has sometimes almost been exalted into a religion. Yet no one can deny the existence of those who tower above their fellows in genius, in eloquence, in commanding influence and power. They are often

[1] *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, i. p. 97.
[2] *Queen Victoria's Journal*, June 20, 1837.

delightfully unconscious of their claim to distinction. Mr. Gladstone said—

I am by no means sure that Providence has endowed me with anything that can be called a striking gift. But if there be such a thing entrusted to me, it has been shown at certain political junctures in what may be termed an appreciation of the general situation and its results.

God needs His providential men, and He can always find them. Their mission is to stamp great thoughts on the minds of their fellows, or to carry through enterprises which are beyond the strength of ordinary workers. History makes us familiar with a succession of such men. They saw their task, and linked themselves to those resources of heaven and of earth by which it could be accomplished. The vision of duty never faded from their eyes, and they bent all their strength and energy to its realization. That is what Lord Rosebery meant when he described Oliver Cromwell as

a practical mystic—the most formidable and terrible of all combinations. The man who combines inspiration derived—and, in my judgement really derived—from close communion with the supernatural and the celestial; the man who has that inspiration and adds to it the energy of a mighty man of action,—such a man as that lives in communion with a Sinai of his own, and he appears to come down to the world below armed with no less than the terrors and decrees of the Almighty Himself.[1]

[1] Speech at Unveiling of Cromwell's Statue, November 15, 1899.

That order of practical mystics embraces mighty names. Moses, St. Paul, Luther, Wesley, all belong to it; and the world lies under a growing debt to them for what they accomplished as signal instruments of Providence. The more we study such lives the stronger our confidence becomes both in Divine and human Providence.

We cannot afford wantonly to lose sight of great men and memorable lives, and are bound to store up objects for admiration as far as may be; for the effect of implacable research is constantly to reduce their number. No intellectual exercise, for instance, can be more invigorating than to watch the working of the mind of Napoleon, the most entirely known as well as the ablest of historic men. In another sphere, it is the vision of a higher world to be intimate with Fénelon, the cherished model of politicians, ecclesiastics, and men of letters, the witness against one century and precursor of another, the advocate of the poor against oppression, of liberty in an age of arbitrary power, of tolerance in an age of persecution, of the humane virtues among men accustomed to sacrifice them to authority, the man of whom one enemy says that his cleverness was enough to strike terror, and another, that genius poured in torrents from his eyes. For the minds that are greatest and best alone furnish the instructive examples. A man of ordinary proportion or inferior metal knows not how to think out the rounded circle of his thought, how to divest his will of its surroundings and to rise above the pressure of time and race and circumstance, to choose the star that guides his course, to correct, and test, and assay his convictions by the light within, and, with a resolute conscience and ideal courage, to remodel and reconstitute the character which birth and education gave him.[1]

[1] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, pp. 5–6.

Faith in Divine Providence gains new strength as we watch its chosen instruments brought forth. It still astonishes us to find Saul of Tarsus leading the early Church into broader views and wider fields of usefulness. The very man who had been a stumbling-block to those who followed the paths of Providence is transformed into a foremost champion of the new faith. Chrysostom's master regretted that the Christians had stolen one who might have been the foremost champion of pagan philosophy in Antioch. Ambrose, trained as a Roman governor, is seized on by the people of Milan as their bishop, and becomes the providential man of Northern Italy. Luther came from a monastery to reform the Church of Rome. Wesley was drawn from his college quiet to become the evangelist of England. Such lives increase our confidence in the overruling Providence that selects its human instruments with such infinite wisdom.

Great thoughts—and surely the unity and the holiness of God are great thoughts—call for great men to declare them. They are not impressed on common mortals by cold reasoning and dry-as-dust antiquarianism, but only by the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of men who live by truth, and count all other things as loss if they may gain truth. Great men are not merely the straws that show us which way the current flows; they are more like the winds of heaven striving on the deep, and often beating dead against the current. And as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so is the coming of a great man. It is chance in the sense of being due to obscure causes; but no theist can allow that

it is chance in the sense of coming to pass apart from the ordered guidance he is bound to find in history.[1]

Our National Portrait Gallery gives an impressive view of what Providence has done for England in dowering it with great men. The gifts of the ruler, the statesman, the judge, the poet, the historian, the painter, the man of science, the soldier and the sailor, the discoverer, the inventor—all are represented there. What repeated gifts of Providence to our nation are these! Other lands have their own rolls of providential men. The country is poor indeed that has no such gallery, even though it may not have taken visible shape and form. Nor does the nation grudge these great men their influence and honour. It rather adds to them. They are its servants, the workers on whom it leans. A providential man like Lord Lister may use his gifts as surgeon and scientist to relieve the suffering of the world and prolong a multitude of precious lives. The terrible destitution of a London street arab made Dr. Barnardo change his intention of becoming a missionary to China in order to devote himself to the rescue of destitute children at home. When he took Lord Shaftesbury's guests in cabs to the neighbourhood of Billingsgate, where they found seventy-three waifs, old and young, sleeping under tarpaulins, they also recognized the providential call which the young doctor had heard and resolved to obey.[2] Dr. Stephenson

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 18.

[2] *Memoirs of Dr. Barnardo*, pp. 77–86.

was led by the same Providence to his great field of usefulness.

The law of sacrifice for others must rule every providential life, but it must be mightiest in the mighty. The Church has its divine example here. Our Lord trod that road. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Mark x. 45). That is the pattern life. The ideal of the ancient world exalted the great man above law, and recognized him as lord over his fellows. Jesus broke that idol. 'It is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all' (Mark x. 43–4).

St. Paul is a conspicuous example of a vase of election. He lives for Christ. To make Him known to others, to win their love and loyalty for his Master, that is Paul's vocation, to fulfil which he sacrifices all things in an ecstasy of devotion. The man of Providence who is called to some great task must be ready to take that road. Look at the providential men of the mission-field. What sacrifices they have made, what dangers they have faced, what loneliness and misunderstanding they have borne! It has always been thus with the chosen instruments of Providence.

If we go on to cast a look at the fate of these World-Historical persons, whose vocation it was to be agents of the World-Spirit—we shall find it to have been no happy one. They attained no calm enjoyment; their whole life

was labour and trouble; their whole nature was nought else but their master-passion. When their object is attained they fall off like empty hulls from the kernel. They die early, like Alexander; they are murdered, like Caesar; transported to St. Helena, like Napoleon.[1]

Providence cannot accomplish its purposes by great men alone. It needs its multitude of humbler yet not less beneficial instruments. Each man is intended to be an agent of Providence in his own sphere. The effort of a lowly worker may appear absolutely insignificant in itself, yet it is a vital part of the vast providential whole. Every home is a minor realm in the empire of Divine Providence. It has its own crowned king and queen. Thomas Carlyle describes Teufelsdröckh as a boy watching his foster-parents at church. 'The highest I knew on earth I here saw bowed down, with awe unspeakable, before a Higher in heaven.' There are spheres in which all can be allies of Providence, and some of the most fruitful and happy work is done in lowly places where humble lives are consecrated to love and duty. To recognize this vocation and lend oneself to it gives new zest to life. It is redeemed from narrowness, for it is part of a universal plan over which Heaven presides; it has a touch of divine dignity which comes from its partnership with God Himself. Man's freedom entitles him to bring his joyful sacrifice as a willing offering to the service of God and God's world.

[1] Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 32.

The world has never lacked such workers. Even in the darkest time there has been a consecrated band.

There were reformers before the Reformation—poor men of Lyons and the like, who wrought no great immediate deliverance, yet without whose prelusive efforts even Luther's mighty energy might have been exerted in vain. It needs only that a few be a little in advance of their time, dissatisfied with things as they are, sighing for a springtide of new life, communicating their aspirations and propagating their discontent here and there, as social relations and duties give them opportunity. Such is the obscure though not ignoble part assigned to the many: to keep themselves as far as may be unspotted from an evil world, and to pray that existing evil may one day be mended.[1]

Man is trained for his part as a minister and instrument of Divine Providence in an imperfect world. He is capable of education; and this world, with its burdens and problems, gives wonderful opportunities for cultivating all his powers. His own nature is his school.

There is for man an inestimable moral value in the very conditions of his existence in a material body and a material world. His subjection to material wants, his limitations in time and space, and the natural ties of kinship and obligation, are part and parcel of a providential discipline adapted to cultivate the ethical nature.[2]

We may contrast the man of Providence as he is and as he ought to be; as he enters God's school and as he

[1] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 339.
[2] Dr. Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 573.

leaves it. He must be a scholar and a servant, quick to learn, sympathetic, enterprising, vigilant, unwearying. Out of such stuff Divine Providence can shape noble instruments, and the more perfectly these conditions are met the more effectually God can use His servants.

Men sometimes spoil their work as instruments of Divine Providence by lack of sympathy and even of imagination. The more a man loses himself by being absorbed in the plans of Divine Providence, the more does he find himself enriched on every side of his nature and his existence. There is a significant passage in Mr. Henderson's Life of Sir George Grey, the great proconsul.

> Grey had all the glowing enthusiasm of a strenuous idealist, and the unsatisfied yearning of a man whose reach never exceeds his grasp; he too regarded himself as an instrument of divine will, and felt his littleness in the presence of that mighty Power which ruled the stars; but he never reached those sublime heights of spiritual being in which considerations of self are lost in an all-absorbing desire to serve the infinite.

The man of Providence has a glorious field for the exercise of his powers. He is akin to all around him. This 'means that he is the elder brother in the great family of the creation, that by birth he is initiated, so to speak, into a relation of mutual love and helpfulness with his surroundings, a relationship and a privilege he can accept and develop if he will.'[1] The

[1] M. C. Albright, *The Common Heritage*, p. 117.

terror which man had of his surroundings in early ages is thus removed. He is no longer a slave to the blind forces of Nature. That bondage is broken through. The power that was once deemed to be immovable and indifferent has been found 'ready to become a willing agent and a helpmeet to man in his larger aims.' His environment is providential, and reveals its power to further his schemes in a way that men never dreamt who had not dug riches out of the earth or used the ocean as a highway by which the wealth of the world might be distributed among the nations. The capacity for helpfulness which is waiting to be developed promises many a future surprise such as steam and electricity have furnished.

Man has been apt to speak of 'The Laws of Nature,' and to school himself to bow before them. He does well indeed to reverence them, and to set aside all thought of diverting their forces to suit his selfish purposes. He is capable of entering into conscious fellowship with the world in which he finds himself and uniting himself with what he believes to be the great purpose of the whole.[1]

The wise man, like Socrates, will be learning to the last day of his life. The time comes, however, when he is ready for his discharge. He needs relief and rest. Others are ready to fill his place, and are more in touch with the times. The man of Providence has many happy hours, but one of the happiest is that when he hears his Master's 'Well done.'

[1] M. C. Albright, *The Common Heritage*, p. 122.

The world gains by these promotions to higher service, painful though they are to those who must step into the breach which Providence continually makes in the ranks of its noblest and most devoted servants.

It becomes apparent that the generations of man must not linger too long if progress is to be maintained. Man must come and go in quick succession if the river of humanity is to flow on in ever increasing fullness of spiritual vitality.[1]

The close of Theodoret's Orations on Providence sums up the whole duty of man—

Knowing these things therefore, and having thoroughly learned the providence of God which [reaches] through all things, and discerning that philanthropy of God which cannot be tracked out by human minds, and seeing His boundless pity, cease to strive against the Creator, learn to hymn the Benefactor, render grateful thanks for the benefits. Sacrifice to God, the sacrifice of thanksgiving ; do not pollute your tongue with blasphemy, but make it an organ of that praise for which it was made. Adore the divine works which are visible ; do not, indeed, inquire too curiously into the hidden things, but expect the knowledge of them in the future. When we lay aside our sufferings then we shall receive perfect knowledge. Do not imitate Adam, who ventured to pluck the forbidden fruits; do not lay hands on the hidden things, but leave the knowledge of these to its own time. Obey the wise man who writes: 'Do not say, What is this? Wherefore is that? For He hath made all things for their uses' (Ecclus. xxxix. 21). Everywhere, therefore, gather occasions for hymns, and making thence one hymnody, offer it with yourself to the Creator, giver of good things, and the Saviour Christ, our true God. To Him be glory, and adoration, and greatness to endless ages. Amen.

[1] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 122.

VII

NATURE AS A BOOK OF PROVIDENCE

Let us begin, then, by asking whether all this which they call the universe is left to the guidance of an irrational and random chance, or, on the contrary, as our fathers declared, is ordered and governed by a marvellous intelligence and wisdom.—PLATO.

The infinite and eternal Power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God.—PROFESSOR FISKE, *Idea of God*, cf. v. § and pp. 105–10.

Nature 'looks most like an immensely long chapter of accidents, and is really, if true, a chapter of special providences of Him without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and whose greatness, wisdom, and perpetual care I never understood as I have since I became a convert to Darwin's views.'—CHARLES KINGSLEY, *Life*, ii. 154, ch. xx.

And Nature, the Old Nurse, took
  The child upon her knee,
Saying: 'Here is a story-book
  Thy Father has written for thee.'

'Come wander with me,' she said,
  'Into regions yet untrod;
And read what is still unread
  In the manuscripts of God.'
LONGFELLOW, *The Fiftieth Birthday of Agassiz.*

Lord, according to Thy words,
I have considered Thy birds;
And I find their life good
And better the better understood.
GEORGE MACDONALD, *Consider the Ravens.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The word 'Nature' much abused	129
Darwin's view	130
Nature a book of Divine Providence	131
The argument from design	131
The wonder and mystery abide	133
Theodoret's view of Nature supplemented by modern science	134
Hooker and Hume	136
Nature designed to promote health and happiness of man	137
Adaptation of creatures to their environment	138
Tennyson's feeling about Nature	140
Impressive vastness of the field	140
The struggle for existence	141
Mill's arraignment of Nature	141
Dr. Wallace takes a brighter view	144
Earthquakes and volcanoes	145
Disasters overruled	146
Dante and Strabo	147
Nature full of providential riches	148

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VII

NATURE is a term that is much abused. It is narrowed down to signify animals and plants, or personified to represent the ruler of the universe. The latter use empties the idea of 'God' of its most distinctive concept, which is perhaps most simply described by the word 'Providence.' He who guides the movement of the cosmos cannot Himself be identified with the cosmos.[1]

Dr. Ray Lankester may help us to a definition.

> By the professed student of modern sciences [Nature] is usually understood as a name for the entire mechanism of the universe, the cosmos in all its parts; and it is in this sense that I use it.[2]

To Jesus Christ Nature was a book of Divine Providence. The great passage of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vi. 25–30) represents the heavenly Father feeding the birds and clothing the grass of the field. Our Lord thus inspires the 'Christian belief in a universe which is everywhere alive, not with life of its own, but through the immanence of a living God.'[3]

[1] *Guardian*, March 11, 1907, p. 594.
[2] *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 2.
[3] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 20.

St. Paul lays emphasis on the thought that for all men Nature is a mighty revelation of God. 'For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse' (Rom. i. 20).

The greatest student of Nature in the nineteenth century sets his seal to St. Paul's statement. When the grandeur of a Brazilian forest burst upon Darwin, he wrote in his Journal: 'It is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion, which fill and elevate the mind.'

As he quoted this sentence in later years, he added: 'I well remember my conviction that there is more in man than the breath of his body.'[1] But Darwin saw that he had stronger evidence than these feelings of wonder.

Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity for looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting, I am compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. . . . But then arises the doubt, Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 311.

that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions ?[1]

Man's mind, we hold, may be trusted to deal with evidence. His faculties are given him for that very purpose; and as he brings them to bear on the wonders of Nature, he discovers everywhere the hand of God sustaining and renewing the earth. If that is not granted all else fails us. 'There is no room for God unless Nature itself in all its parts and all its details is the expression of a divine purpose limited by neither space nor time.'[2]

Nature, then, is a book of Divine Providence. There is revealed in it a wisdom which is beyond our thought, a power which more and more astonishes us as we attempt to fathom it. God is working everywhere.

His omnipresence as a doctrine of religion simply means that His action is not hindered by distance like ours, but is as direct in any one place as in any other; and His immanence means, further, that the common works of Nature are as truly divine acts as anything we can imagine done by a miracle.[3]

Darwin thought that the law of natural selection undermined the old argument from design in Nature. 'We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man.' He

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 312–3; see also p. 306.
[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 278.
[3] Ibid., ii. 277.

tells a correspondent, however, 'You have expressed my inward conviction, though far more vividly and clearly than I could have done, that the universe is not the result of chance.'[1]

The Duke of Argyll once talked to Darwin about his studies on *Fertilization of Orchids*, and on *Earthworms*, with the wonderful contrivances of Nature revealed in such realms. The Duke thought it was impossible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and the expression of mind. He never forgot what Mr. Darwin said in reply.

> He looked at me very hard and said, 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, adding, 'it seems to go away.'[2]

Darwin wrote to Asa Gray—

> I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidae* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 316.

[2] *Good Words*, April, 1885, p. 244; Darwin's *Life and Letters*, i. 316.

to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion *at all* satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each hope and believe what he can. Certainly I agree with you that my views are not at all necessarily atheistical.[1]

In a company where Darwin's name was mentioned, Strauss exclaimed triumphantly, 'Darwin!—the man who drove the miraculous out of the universe!' 'But did he?' (added the Archbishop of Armagh, in speaking of a lady who had lost faith). 'Did he drive out anything but a shallow interpretation of the miraculous? Did she understand what Jesus said to the Jews? "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," the miracle of continual creation.'

This is well put by Professor Gwatkin.

In the light of science we see now that the world is not a machine made once for all by some great engineer's hand from outside, but an organism slowly developed by a power working from within.[2]

Sir William Flower, Director of the Natural History Museum, the trusted friend of Darwin and the leading scientific workers of his time, clearly pointed out, in an address to the Church Congress in 1883, that if Darwin's view is accepted 'the wonder and mystery of creation remain as wonderful and mysterious as before.'

[1] *Life and Letters*, ii. 312; see also pp. 354, 377.
[2] *The Knowledge of God*, i. 39.

If the succession of small miracles formerly supposed to regulate the operations of Nature no longer satisfies us, have we not substituted for them one of immeasurable greatness and grandeur ?[1]

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in the fifth century, wrote ten orations concerning Providence. The first demonstrates it from the sky, the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars; the second from air, land, sea, rivers, and fountains; the third from the human frame; the fourth from human hands and the arts; the fifth from the *imperium* committed to man over the brute. Five of the ten orations are thus based on Nature. Science in the fifth century was still in its cradle. There was no telescope, no microscope, no real knowledge of the human frame. Geology, chemistry, medicine were all practically unborn; yet to the eyes of this Christian thinker Nature was one vast book of Providence. The last century has revolutionized the methods for the study of Nature, and allowed us to penetrate into a thousand secrets of which former ages scarcely dreamed. Psalmist and prophet had their vision. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork' (Ps. xix. 1); 'Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking' (Isa. xl. 26). But astronomy has enabled us to grasp the law stamped on stars and suns

[1] *Sir William Henry Flower*, pp. 97–9.

and planets, and to trace there the hand of Divine Providence in a way that fills us with never-ceasing wonder.

Our debt to Science is manifold, and it is always growing. Its real theme is the world as a book of Providence. There has been many a conflict of views between the scientist and the theologian, and scientific workers have not seldom put forth unreasonable claims to authority; yet how much richer scientific research has made us in knowledge of the world and ourselves! Every living creature is seen to have its place and purpose. The balance maintained by Nature between living things is a growing revelation of the Providence that rules over all realms of life. Man has sometimes paid dearly when he has thoughtlessly disturbed this wonderful adjustment and interaction.

This age has seen the conviction that Nature bears upon it the stamp of God grow deeper and more intelligent. Christian men of science like Faraday, the Herschels, Sir David Brewster, Romanes, Lord Kelvin, have been powerful champions of this truth. To trace divine wisdom and skill through the various realms of Nature is to become familiar with amazing forethought, beneficence, and wealth of resources, and to find how marvellously all work in harmony. Science cannot solve the problems of 'the origin and nature of matter and force, the source of motion, of life, of sensation and consciousness, of rational intelligence and language, of Free-will, of the reign of law and order to which all

Nature testifies.'[1] God is the explanation of Nature. 'She is the wondrous product of His Almighty will; and for us, of all created things, she is the grandest and most admirable.'[2]

For we see the whole world and each part thereof so compacted, that as long as each thing performeth only that work which is natural unto it, it thereby preserveth both other things, and also itself. Contrariwise let any principal thing, as the sun, the moon, any one of the heavens or elements, but once cease or fail, or swerve; and who doth not easily conceive, that the sequel thereof would be ruin both to itself, and whatsoever dependeth on it.[3]

Hume argues that, allowing 'the gods to be the authors of the existence or order of the universe, it follows, that they possess that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in their workmanship. . . . As the universe shows wisdom and goodness, we infer wisdom and goodness. As it shows a particular degree of these perfections, we infer a particular degree of them, precisely adapted to the effect which we examine.'[4]

That makes us sure of our ground in this study of Nature as a book of Providence. We have certain things before us on which we can build up a reliable doctrine as to God's rule over the world.

[1] Gerard, *The Old Riddle and the Newest Answer*, ch. xviii.

[2] Lamarck, *Systeme Analytique*, p. 40.

[3] Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, i. 9.

[4] *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, section xi., 'On a Particular Providence and of a Future State,' §§ 106, 113.

The way in which Nature is designed to preserve life and to promote health and happiness, grows more marvellous as we study it. Not least wonderful is the structure of the earth, with its atmosphere, its varying climates, its seas and rivers. The floor of stone on which we live is covered with a carpet of soil in which every manner of food can be produced for man and beast. Here is the rich laboratory where cold and heat, winter and summer, work to supply daily bread for the world. Earth, air, water—each yields its harvest to satisfy the wants of every living thing.

The food stores of the earth are a continual revelation of the wisdom and the power of God. The very range at which corn and cotton grow bears witness to the Providence that is over Nature. Wheat seems to be as old as man; it is certainly more ancient than civilization, or than any known language. Here is an open book full of the marvels of divine care. 'The providence of God as preservation and co-operation is exercised over the vast system of things as one immense but not unbounded organic unity.'[1]

The world's Magna Charta is that ancient promise: 'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease' (Gen. viii. 22). The continued existence of man proves that the promise has never been broken.

Look at one force among the servants of Nature.

[1] Pope, *Compendium of Theology*, p. 195.

Water is far the most important of all the terrestrial agents by which the surface of the earth is geologically modified. In Nature's ceaseless system of circulation 'there is not a drop of water that is not busy with its allotted task of changing the face of the earth.' The rain works its way over or through the earth and becomes loaded with material drawn from rock and soil. 'Day by day the process is advancing. So far as we can tell, it has never ceased since the first shower of rain fell upon the earth.'[1] This removal and renewal of soil is specially seen in heavy rainstorms in India, which sweep an almost incredible amount of soil and earth into the sea.[2]

Richard Jefferies exults in the riches of Providence.

> Nature flings treasures abroad, puffs them with open lips along every breeze, piles up lavish layers of them in the free open air, packs countless numbers together in the needles of a fir-tree. Prodigality and superfluity are stamped on everything she does. The ear of wheat returns a hundred-fold the grain from which it grew. The surface of the earth offers to us far more than we consume. The grains, the seeds, the fruits, the animals, the abounding products are beyond the power of all the human race to devour. They can, too, be multiplied a thousand-fold. There is no natural lack.

The adaptation of creatures to their environment furnishes striking disclosures of the Providence that

[1] Geikie, *Text-Book of Geology*, p. 448.
[2] Ibid., p. 461.

watches over Nature. The young sparrow has not a particle of down upon its body when it breaks the shell, the young snipe emerges large and strong with a thick downy coat. One is to be sheltered in a covered nest, the other runs about from its birth. The young lapwing has a white collar round its neck which makes its little body appear to be two separate things. 'This helps them to escape the notice of their enemies, and furnishes us with a beautiful instance of the way in which Nature takes care of her helpless children.' The ptarmigan's summer dress is a coat of feathers of varying shades of brown and grey, so cunningly mixed that it is difficult to detect the female brooding on her nest, even when you are looking at her sitting at your feet, amongst grey lichen-clad stones, stunted brown heather, and moss of various tints. In winter the bird has to live amongst the snow, and its feathers change from freckled grey to pure white, so that it is hidden from its enemies.[1] Instinct is the ally of Providence, and the bird seems to change its ground to suit its changed colour.[2]

We discern the same Providence at work in every realm of Nature. In the heavens above us it is brought out more clearly by every addition to the power of our telescopes, whilst the microscope has no less marvellous stories to tell of the world that is hidden from the unaided human eye. All our study of Nature bears

[1] Kearton, *The Fairyland of Living Things*, pp. 27–8, 40–2.
[2] Ibid., p. 42.

out the Bible teaching that God's providence extends to every living thing. All creatures wait on God that He may give them their food in due season (Ps. civ. 27); from Him the lions seek their meat (Ps. civ. 21); the ravens cry unto Him (Job xxxviii. 41). All depend for life and being on His providence.

Lord Tennyson once picked up a daisy as he walked with his son, and looking at its crimson-tipped leaves, said, 'Does not this look like a thinking Artificer, one who wishes to ornament?'[1] His feeling about Nature is impressively described.

> Everywhere throughout the universe he saw the glory and greatness of God, and the science of Nature was particularly dear to him. Every new fact which came within his range was carefully weighed. As he exulted in the wilder aspects of Nature and revelled in the thunder-storm, so he felt a joy in her orderliness; he felt a rest in her steadfastness, patient progress, and hopefulness; the same seasons ever returned; the same stars wheeled in their courses; the flowers and trees blossomed and the birds sang yearly in their appointed months; and he had a triumphant appreciation of her ever-new revelations of beauty.[2]

Fresh wonders are daily being discovered in the book of Nature which give growing evidence of providential adaptation and arrangement. A wide survey of Nature is sometimes, however, almost overwhelming.

We are used to the tame and domestic animals, but when 'suddenly brought into the full assemblage of those

[1] *Life*, i. 313. [2] Ibid., i. 312.

mysterious beings with which it has pleased Almighty wisdom to people the earth, a sort of dizziness comes over' us and we fall 'into a kind of scepticism.' Nature seems to be too powerful and various, or at least too strange, to be the work of God, according to that Image which our imbecility has set up within us for the Infinite and Eternal, and as we have framed to ourselves our contracted notions of His attributes and His acts; and if we do not submit ourselves in awe to His great mysteriousness, and chasten our hearts and keep silence, we shall be in danger of losing our belief in His presence and providence altogether.[1]

Certain problems raised by Nature as a book of Providence are not easy of explanation. It is the scene of a never-ending struggle for existence, a struggle which seems to be attended with such suffering and even torture that our hearts bleed as we contemplate it. A formidable indictment against Divine Providence has been framed on this supposed imperfection and cruelty of Nature. Lucretius, who denounced the very idea of Providence, argued from the great faultiness of the universe that it was not framed by the gods.[2] John Stuart Mill pressed this home relentlessly. He holds that 'all praise of civilization, or art, or contrivance, is so much dispraise of Nature; an admission of

[1] Newman, *Two Essays on Scripture Miracles and Ecclesiastical*, p. 149.

[2] Quod si jam rerum ignorem primordia quae sint,
Hoc tamen ex ipsis caeli rationibus ausim
Confirmare aliisque ex rebus reddere multis,
Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse paratam
Naturam rerum; tanta stat praedita culpa.
De rerum Natura, V. vv. 195–9.

imperfection, which it is man's business, and merit, to be always endeavouring to correct or mitigate.'[1]

Nature's methods cannot be imitated by man.

Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow creatures. If, by an arbitrary reservation, we refuse to account anything murder but what abridges a certain term supposed to be allotted to human life, Nature also does this to all but a small percentage of lives, and does it in all the modes, violent or insidious, in which the worst human beings take the lives of one another. Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and the worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequence of the noblest acts; and it might almost be imagined as a punishment for them.[2]

Mill pushes his indictment further, and arraigns the Providence which permits hurricane and earthquake.

[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 21.
[2] Ibid., pp. 28–9.

Next to taking life (equal to it according to a high authority) is taking the means by which we live; and Nature does this too on the largest scale and with the most callous indifference. A single hurricane destroys the hopes of a season; a flight of locusts, or an inundation, desolates a district; a trifling chemical change in an edible root starves a million of people. The waves of the sea, like banditti, seize and appropriate the wealth of the rich and the little all of the poor with the same accompaniments of stripping, wounding, and killing as their human antitypes. Everything in short, which the worst men commit either against life or property is perpetrated on a larger scale by natural agents.[1]

He brushes aside any suggestion that the evil in the world exists to prevent greater evils. This, he holds, can have no application to an omnipotent Creator. 'If the Maker of the world *can* all that He will, He wills misery, and there is no escape from the conclusion.'[2] Mill leans to a Manichaean explanation of suffering as the work of an evil power, but says, 'If we are not to believe the animal creation to be the work of a demon, it is because we need not suppose it to have been made by a Being of infinite power.'[3]

He would sacrifice the attribute of omnipotence to preserve that of beneficence. According to his view the divine wisdom is perfect, the goodness infinite, but the power 'limited by some inexplicable viciousness in the original constitution of things which it must require a long succession of ages to overcome.'[4]

[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 30.
[2] Ibid., p. 37. [3] Ibid., p. 58.
[4] Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 17.

Mill adds that the man who resists an impulse to sin, or helps in the slightest degree to make the world better than he found it, 'may actually be regarded as a participator in the creative work of God; and thus each act of human life acquires a solemn significance that is almost overwhelming to contemplate.'[1]

Mill's dark view of Nature, so the most competent judges hold, is a grievous error. The philosopher's anguish at the suffering of the animal world does him honour, but he does not look at things with the trained eye of a naturalist. Alfred Russel Wallace, a far more capable witness than he, claims a hearing. Darwin counted much on his help, and told him, 'You are the man to apply to in a difficulty.'[2] Dr. Wallace is not afraid to maintain that animals in Nature 'have an almost perpetual enjoyment in their lives.' His conclusion is that, 'given the necessity of death and reproduction—and without them there could have been no progressive development of the animal world—it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured.'

There is little doubt that this is the true view. Mill overlooked the brighter side of Nature, and exaggerated the pain and suffering till it became a nightmare. Professor Mivart says—

Though, of course, animals feel, they do not know that they feel, nor reflect upon the sufferings they have had or

[1] Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, pp. 17–8.
[2] *My Life*, ii. p. 4.

will have to endure. If a wasp, while enjoying a meal of honey, has its slender waist suddenly snipped through and its whole abdomen cut away, it does not allow such a trifle for a moment to interrupt its pleasurable repast, but it continues to rapidly devour the savoury food, which escapes as rapidly from its mutilated thorax.[1]

We have all felt Tennyson's horror of 'Nature red in tooth and claw,' yet we must not allow such a feeling to distort our view.

The universality of pain throughout the range of the animal world, reaching back into the distant ages of geology, and involved in the very structure of the animal organism, is without doubt among the most serious problems which the Theist has to face. But it is a problem in dealing with which emotion is very often mistaken for logic. J. S. Mill's famous indictment of Nature, for example, is one of the most emotional pieces of rhetoric of which a professed logician was ever guilty.[2]

As to the physical catastrophes of which Mill speaks, Sir John Herschel may be called as witness.

In the study of these vast and awful phenomena we are brought in contact with those immense and rude powers of nature which seem to convey to the imagination the impress of brute force and lawless violence; but it is not so. . . . In their wildest paroxysms the rage of the volcano and the earthquake is subject to great and immutable laws: they feel the bridle and obey it. . . . There is mighty and rough work to be accomplished, and it cannot be done by gentle means.[3]

[1] *Lessons from Nature*, p. 369.
[2] Dr. Illingworth, 'The Problem of Pain,' in *Lux Mundi*, p. 133.
[3] *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, p. 19.

He asks whether earthquakes and volcanoes may not

> form part and parcel of some great scheme of providential arrangement which is at work for good and not for ill. . . . The volcano and the earthquake, dreadful as they are, as local and temporary visitations, are in fact unavoidable (I had almost said necessary) incidents in a vast system of action to which we owe the very ground we stand upon, the very land we inhabit, without which neither man, beast, nor bird would have a place for their existence, and the world would be the habitation of nothing but fishes.[1]

By such means Providence makes a profound impression. In many cases the very disasters themselves are turned to account. The effort required to avert them or to repair the havoc they have wrought, is a stimulus to ingenuity and enterprise. Sometimes what would have been called a national calamity has been used by Providence to introduce a new era. The history of medicine and surgery is the response of human providence to sickness and suffering.

> The awful Black Death, which had seemed so relentless and cruel in its attacks, turned out in the end to have been one of the chief means of changing the old order of land-owning and tilling for an easier system, and of making men in their own interests do tardy but needful justice to their fellows.[2]

These problems present a sharp test for faith and patience; yet after allowing them due weight, we reach

[1] *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, pp. 2–3.
[2] York Powell, *History of England*, i. 88.

the conclusion that Nature reveals a providential care and goodness which is in harmony with the other realms where we can watch its operations. It is easy to find fault with some of its arrangements. Critics have taken 'a grim pleasure in pointing out flaws in the constitution of things.'

Among modern writers the most conspicuous instance of this temper is afforded by that much too positive philosopher Auguste Comte, who would fain have tipped the earth's axis at a different angle and altered the arrangements of Nature in many ways. He was like Alphonso, the learned king of Castile, who regretted that he had not been present when the world was created—he could have given such excellent advice! [1]

Dante's 'Vision of Paradise' closes with that glorious unfolding of God's works and ways—

> I look'd
> While sight was unconsumed; and in that depth,
> Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whate'er
> The universe unfolds; all properties
> Of substance and of accident, beheld
> Compounded, yet one individual light
> The whole.[2]

Strabo was not satisfied with the Nile.

If you dispute Providence and Destiny you can find many things in human affairs and nature that you would suppose might be much better performed in this or that way; as, for instance, that Egypt should have plenty of rain of its own without being irrigated from the land of Ethiopia.[3]

[1] Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 99.
[2] *Paradiso*, Canto xxxiii.; Cary's translation, 85.
[3] Book iv. c. 1.

Lord Cromer's comment on this passage shows how the old geographer misunderstood Providence. 'In no other country in the world has agriculture been made so independent of the vicissitudes of the seasons.' Nature seems to have granted man the most favourable conditions, and when modern engineering began to direct the forces of the Nile the crops of cotton and sugar were more than trebled. The resources thus set within the reach of human providence are almost inexhaustible.[1]

An experience is forced upon the mind of the thoughtful naturalist, that, penetrate into Nature wherever he may, thought has been there before him; that, to quote the words of one of the most distinguished naturalists, 'there is really a plan, a thoughtful plan, a plan which may be read in the relations which you, and I, and all living beings scattered over the surface of the earth, hold to one another.

There are some mysteries which perplex us, there is suffering which we cannot altogether explain; but those features are met in every other realm through which we trace Divine Providence, and we wait in confidence for God's own explanation of the suffering, which we can already recognize as a means for the perfecting of the world. Meanwhile Nature repeats to us the lesson it taught the psalmist—

> O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
> In wisdom hast Thou made them all:
> The earth is full of Thy riches (Ps. civ. 24).

[1] *Modern Egypt*, vol. ii. pp. 456–60.
[2] Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, pp. 367–8.

VIII

PROVIDENCE IN THE LIFE OF NATIONS

Je regarde donc l'étude de l'histoire comme l'étude de la Providence.—L'histoire est vraiment une seconde philosophie.—Si Dieu ne parle pas tourjours, il agit tourjours en Dieu.—D'Aguesseau, *Oeuvres*, xv. 34, 31, 35.

We cannot go wrong, says Clement of Alexandria, if we refer all good things to Providence, whether they be Christian or heathen.—Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 95.

Historiae ipsius praeter delectationem utilitas nulla est, quam ut religionis Christianae veritas demonstretur, quod aliter quam per historiam fieri non potest.—Leibnitz, *Opera*, ed. Dutens, vi. 297.

The more a man is versed in business the more he finds the hand of Providence everywhere. All is Providence, whose favour is to be merited by virtue.—William Pitt (after Quebec was taken). W. D. Green, *William Pitt*, p. 154.

The subject of Modern History is of all others, to my mind, the most interesting, inasmuch as it includes all questions of the deepest interest relating not to human things only, but to divine.—Arnold, *Modern History*, p. 311.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Bible view of Providence in the life of nations	151
Growing recognition in our own time	151
Hegel's protest against a peddling view	152
Raleigh's History of the World as a study of Providence	154
Lord Acton and Bishop Creighton on the judgements of history	157
Providence in Jewish history	159
Testimony of the Cuneiform Inscriptions	162
The vocation of Greece	162
Rome as an instrument of Providence	165
Contribution of Israel, Greece, and Rome to the divine plan	166
The Teutonic genius needed	167
Rome as a schoolmistress for the nations	168
The Northern nations work out their own destiny	170
Providence in the Renaissance and the Discovery of America	171
Small nations as instruments of Providence	172
Providential gifts of the Northern races	173
The United States and Canada	174
The training of the lower races	175
Nations as instruments for the spiritual development of mankind	177
Lord Acton on Providence in History	178
The plan of Providence as seen in the life of nations	179
Dr. Arnold's view	180
The march of progress	183
George Steward on Providence in National Life	188

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VIII

THE Old Testament view of Providence is largely limited to the history of Israel, though there are passages which take a wider sweep, and bear witness to a noble universality as well as a lofty patriotism. The promise to Abraham, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (Gen. xii. 3), indicates that Providence has designs for the future blessing of the whole world. In the Sermon on the Mount the divine care extends to all men as children of the heavenly Father, and the great commission to the Apostles embraces all nations in its scope as possible disciples of the one Master.

St. Paul's outlook also is world-wide. He opened his heart before a worthy audience in Athens. Men were linked to God by bonds forged through their daily needs. All nations were of one blood, and Providence had appointed the bounds of their habitation that all alike might be linked to the common source of life and blessing. This is a noble unfolding of the Providence that shapes the destiny of nations.

The growing recognition of Divine Providence in national history is one of the glories of our time. It

knits the races of men into a vast brotherhood, of which every member is dear to the common Father. It is interesting to watch the growth of this conception in the last hundred and fifty years.

Lessing took a backward step when he rejected history as a source for the knowledge of God; yet he also gave to the world the fruitful thought that history is the divine education of the human race, though he somehow missed the inference that the method of education ought to show something of the Teacher's character. And if he seemed (perhaps he did not mean) to teach that one religion is as good as another, even this helped to pull down Christianity from the pedestal on which men had perversely set it, as the one true revelation in a God-forsaken world of false religions.[1]

Professor W. R. Smith refers to 'that large and thoughtful school of theologians' which 'refuses to believe that God's dealings with Israel in the times before Christ can be distinguished under the special name of Revelation from His providential guidance of other nations.' For our part, though we do make the distinction, it does not blind us to the divine care which has guided the destiny of other races.

History, then, is a spacious book of Providence recording how the deeds of men and nations have helped or hindered the purposes of God. Hegel was one of the most acute exponents and champions of this view. He had been struck with the way in which Christian thinkers expressed admiration for the wisdom of God

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 258.

as displayed in animals, plants, and isolated occurrences. He naturally asked, if Providence was busy in this narrower sphere, why not in the greater? 'We must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise His wisdom on the grand scale.'[1] For his part he recognized a plan of Providence by which the passions of men were controlled on the stage of history. He contrasts the readiness to see this plan in isolated cases whilst denying the possibility of discerning it on the large scale.

Pious persons are encouraged to recognize in particular circumstances, something more than mere chance; to acknowledge the guiding hand of God; e.g. when help has unexpectedly come to an individual in great perplexity and need. But these instances of providential design are of a limited kind, and concern the accomplishment of nothing more than the desires of the individual in question. But in the history of the World, the Individuals we have to do with are Peoples; Totalities that are States. We cannot, therefore, be satisfied with what we may call this 'peddling' view of Providence, to which the belief alluded to limits itself. Equally unsatisfactory is the merely abstract, undefined belief in a Providence, when that belief is not brought to bear upon the details of the processes which it conducts. On the contrary our earnest endeavour must be directed to the recognition of the ways of Providence, the means it uses, and the historical phenomena in which it manifests itself; and we must show their connexion with the general principle above mentioned.[2]

[1] *Philosophy of History*, p. 16.
[2] Ibid., p. 15.

For Hegel history was the true Theodicy. It was God's work, and in every page His providence was revealed and justified.

A vast mass of material is now available for the study of this world-wide Providence. It has revolutionized our conception of national history. We discern God everywhere at work. One pathetic attempt at a general survey of this field was made in the Tower of London. Sir Walter Raleigh there ventured to write a History of the World, which Charles Kingsley described as 'the most God-fearing and God-seeing history known of among human writings.' Mr. Stebbings says—

> Its true grandeur is in the scope of the conception which exhibits a masque of the Lords of earth, 'great conquerors and other troublers of the world,' rioting in their wantonness and savagery, as if Heaven cared not or dared not interfere, yet made to pay in the end to the last farthing of righteous vengeance. They are paraded paying it often in their own persons, wrecked, ruined, humiliated; and always in those of their descendants.[1]

The work is one of the greatest ever written in a prison. Events have long since rendered it obsolete, 'but the human asides where Raleigh's personality reveals itself, the little bits of incidental autobiography, the witty, apt illustrations will preserve the work itself from dying.'

Raleigh has a strong belief in Providence. 'Wrong and injustice may prosper for a season, but surely in

[1] *Sir Walter Ralegh*, p. 278.

the end retribution reaches the evil-doer, whatever his power and exaltation.'[1]

Raleigh felt that he had chosen a strange hour for his task, but he was moved by a strong desire to strike a dying blow for the oppressed. He speaks in his first paragraph of the personal difficulties he had to face,

in whom, had there bin no other defect (who am all defect) than the time of the day, it were enough; the day of a tempestuous life, drawne on to the very evening, ere I began. But those inmost, and soule-piercing wounds, which are ever aching, while uncured, with the desire to satisfie those few friends, which I have tryed by the fire of adversitie, the former enforcing, the latter perswading; have caused me to make my thoughts legible, and myselfe the subject of every opinion wise or weake.

The subject is vaster than the historian's canvas.

To repeate God's judgements in particular, upon those of all degrees, which have plaied with His mercies, would require a volume apart; for the sea of examples hath no bottome.

He goes right back to the birth of the world.

The examples of divine providence, every where found (the first divine histories being nothing else but a continuation of such examples) have perswaded me to fetch my beginning from the beginning of all things; to wit, Creation. For though these glorious actions of the Almightie be no nearer and (as it were) linked together, that the one necessarily implyeth the other; Creation, inferring Providence (for what father forsaketh the child he hath begotten?)

[1] Hume's *Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 298.

and Providence presupposing Creation; yet many of those that have seemed to excell in worldly wisdome, have gone about to disjoyne this coherence; the Epicure denying both Creation and Providence, but granting that the world had a beginning; the Aristotelian granting Providence, but denying both the creation and the beginning.[1]

The prisoner in the Tower has wonderful insight into the impartiality manifest in human history.

For seeing God, who is the author of all our tragedies, hath written out for us, and appointed us all the parts we are to play; and hath not, in their distribution, been partiall to the most mighty princes of the world.[2]

As we turn the leaves of his great tome the significance of that saying comes out more fully. History is a book of Divine Providence. The hand of God is visible on every page. We begin to understand why nations lose their influence and pass into obscurity. They cease to serve the purposes of Divine Providence, which looks elsewhere for more fitting instruments.

Our survey must be less ambitious than Raleigh's eagle glance around the world. We can only select a few pages from national records which are continually expanding. Their lesson is manifest. Jean Paul Richter said well: 'Nature forces on our heart a Creator; history a Providence.' Much is clear to us that was hidden from our fathers. We discern the plan of God for the nations; we are able to judge in some measure how far each of

[1] Hume's *Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 20.
[2] *History of the World*, preface, p. 21.

them has fulfilled it. History thus becomes a succession of moral judgements on conduct and character rather than a mere record of events. Lord Acton insisted that 'History is the conscience of mankind' and 'Ethics are the marrow of history.' Like Hegel he saw in events a vindication of the ways of God to men. Human history was 'a constant progress in the direction of freedom under the guidance of Providence.' Bishop Creighton looked on things in another light.

My view of history is not to approach things with any preconceived ideas, but with the natural pietas and sympathy which I try to feel towards all men who do and try to do great things. . . . I try to put myself in their place : to see their limitations, and leave the course of events to pronounce the verdict upon system and men alike.[1]

His wife says that in his *History of the Papacy*

he did not wish to prove anything, to maintain any theories, to make any brilliant generalizations ; his aim was simply and straightforwardly to tell what actually happened, to get at the truth. All critics alike agreed in recognizing his absolute impartiality, some blamed him in consequence for being colourless.[2]

No one blamed him more than Lord Acton. He writes [3] to Creighton—

You say that people in authority are not to be snubbed or sneered at from our pinnacle of conscious rectitude. I really don't know whether you exempt them because of their rank, or of their success and power, or of their date. . . .

[1] *Life and Letters*, i. 376. [2] Ibid., i. 226.
[3] Creighton's *Life*, i. 371.

I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favoured presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption, it is the other way, against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority; still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. The inflexible integrity of the moral code is the secret of the authority, the dignity, the utility of history.

Ranke felt it 'a moral triumph when he could refrain from judging, show that much might be said on both sides, and leave the rest to Providence.'[1]

There is much to be said for both sides in this controversy. We cannot read history intelligently without forming our judgement on the actions of men and nations, and the more complete our knowledge becomes the more likelihood is there of a reliable verdict. Yet we do not forget those reversals of judgement which are a standing protest against hasty censure of others. It is our wisdom to recognize that new light may lead posterity to revise many opinions which we so confidently pronounce to-day. There are of course certain immutable things which must always guide the decision. Sir Thomas Browne put the matter thus—

Think not that morality is ambulatory; that vices in one age are not vices in another, or that virtues, which are

[1] Acton, *Modern History*, p. 19.

under the everlasting seal of right reason, may be stamped by opinion.

Burke takes similar ground.

My principles enable me to form my judgement upon men and actions in history, just as they do in common life; and are not formed out of events and characters, either present or past. History is a preceptor of prudence, not of principles. The principles of true politics are those of morality enlarged; and I neither now do, nor ever will admit of any other.

Yet when these principles are recognized we are still bound in many cases to suspend judgement. It is not always easy to do so. York Powell regarded the historian as the juror, not the judge. His business was to deal with the facts rather than presume to pass the sentence. Yet when he writes history himself he passes moral judgements marked, as he said of Schopenhauer, by 'a splendid set of prejudices.' [2]

Our survey of national history naturally begins with the Old Testament. The story of Israel is a memorable page in the book of Providence. Its service for the world belongs to the sphere of religion. Abraham was selected for this express purpose. 'For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; to the end that the Lord may bring

[1] *Christian Morals*, section xii.
[2] *Spectator*, February 2, 1907, p. 170.

upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him' (Gen. xviii. 19).

God set a fence around the chosen race that they might be preserved from the idolatry and the low moral tone of surrounding nations. At Sinai He put His stamp upon them, and claimed them as His peculiar people. Every reader of the Psalms feels that the nation from which they sprang had a genius for godliness; and the feeling deepens as we study the Prophets. Here is a race adapted for its providential work as a leaven among other nations, an abiding witness for the worship of God.

But although Providence destined the Jews to be guides and leaders of mankind, the elect nation lived to themselves. Pride and selfishness marred the chosen vessel. The temptation was great.

> Such self-consciousness of providential distinction exposes to new dangers. The sense of a peculiar vocation may be perverted into food for a pride which, while very conscious of privilege, neglects duty. This is the besetting sin of all privileged classes. They turn into a monopoly of favour what Providence meant to be an opportunity of universal service.[1]

Yet when every deduction is made, the world's debt to the Jew is great and abiding. Its providential task was to be 'the people of the Word,'[2] and the Old Testament in our hands is evidence that in that respect the design of God was fulfilled. The

[1] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 304.
[2] Forsyth, *Positive Preaching*, p. 10.

story of the Jew is a notable page in the book of Providence. 'Behind it all is the mystery of race and of selection. It is an ultimate fact in the history and government of the world, this eminent genius of one tiny people for religion.'[1]

Judaism had a lofty monotheism and a glorious faith in a living God. The essentials for a great catholic cult are here. If we tried to imagine a world religion, Dr. Talbot says—

> we should, with some generality of consent, define as its essentials three or four points which it is striking to find were fundamentals of the religion of Israel, and at that time of no other. We should require a doctrine of God, lofty, spiritual, moral; a doctrine of man which should affirm and secure his spiritual being and his immortality; and a doctrine of the relations between God and man which should give reality to prayer and to the belief in Providence, and root man's sense of responsibility in the fact of his obligation to a righteousness outside and above himself, a doctrine, in short, of judgement. It needs no words to show how the religion of Israel in its full development not only taught these truths, but gave them the dignity and importance which belong to the corner-stones of a religion.[2]

The coming disasters of the race were hidden from the eyes of the old world. St. Paul's contemporaries had no conception that the end was near.

To them the Jewish people was not declining, but growing. There seemed to be no end to its wealth and

[1] Andrew Lang.

[2] *Lux Mundi*, 'Preparation in History for Christ,' p. 157.

influence. The least of all peoples in itself, it was a nation within a nation in every city. In the wreck of the heathen religions, Judaism alone seemed to remain unchanged.[1]

However much the Jews were disliked, they had a 'vast and penetrating influence over their neighbours.' In Alexandria and other cities they were themselves powerfully influenced by the civilization of the Graeco-Roman world.[2]

The Cuneiform Inscriptions show that some of the Genesis narratives were not exclusively the possession of the Israelites, 'but had their roots in primitive traditions current among other nations. Israel, it has been said, turned all that it touched to gold.'

The Old Testament records the history of a progressive revelation.

When we mark how Israel progressed in knowledge and morality, in spite of all the forces within and without that were constantly dragging it downwards, we are compelled to ask, What was the power that taught Israel? The only answer must be that Israel grew under the constraint of a divine discipline, and that its prophets rightly claimed to be the spokesmen and representatives of the one true God.[3]

Greece also had its vocation. Mr. Gladstone said: 'I claim for ancient Greece a marked, appropriated distinctive place in the providential order of the world.'[4] Its province was to cultivate the intellect, to

[1] Jowett, *Romans*, p. 18.
[2] *Lux Mundi*, p. 154.
[3] Dean of Ely, *Guardian*, May 22, 1907.
[4] *Might of Right*, p. 107.

enrich the human mind with the noblest visions of poetry and philosophy, to adorn life with the marvels of sculpture, painting, and architecture. Nor did it forget to develop every power of the body. Each muscle and sinew was taught to do its work and to be graceful in doing it. The world will always pay its tribute to strength and courage, to power and wealth. Greece taught mankind, under the guidance of Divine Providence, to crown strength with beauty in man himself, in his art and in his literature.

We can trace the way in which Providence moved the race to accomplish this task. 'The Greeks made life beautiful, not because they were self-pleasers, but because they believed in gods who cared for human perfection, for perfect bodies, perfect minds, perfect works, and splendid actions.'[1] That service is abiding.

> Wherever literature consoles sorrow, or assuages pain—wherever it brings gladness to eyes which fail with wakefulness and tears, and ache for the dark house and the long sleep—there is exhibited, in its noblest form, the immortal influence of Athens.[2]

But Greece pushed its worship of grace and beauty too far when it sacrificed truth and honour to gain them. Matthew Arnold says: 'This brilliant Greece perished for lack of attention enough to conduct; for want of conduct, steadiness, character.'[3] The gifted

[1] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature*, p. 18.
[2] Macaulay, On Mitford's *History of Greece*.
[3] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 368.

race thus ceased to have a part in the plan of Providence and sank into insignificance. Its contribution to the training of the world had, however, been made; and, however utilitarian society may become, it never ceases to feel the spell of Athenian art and culture. Greece crowned its service to the world by preparing the language of the New Testament, and for that our debt will be as lasting as the New Testament itself.

It becomes clear, as we study the history of Israel and of Greece, that some races are raised in the scale by the instrumentality of others. Dr. Arnold says—

> This would be sufficiently analogous to the course of Providence in other known cases, e.g. the communicating all religious knowledge to mankind through the Jewish people, and all intellectual civilization through the Greeks; no people having ever yet possessed that activity of mind, and that power of reflection and questioning of things, which are the marks of intellectual advancement, without having derived them mediately or immediately from Greece.[1]

This contribution to the richer life of the world was not only designed by Providence, but care was also taken that it should be made at the moment when it proved most effective. Alexander's career of conquest was 'just too late to hurt the flowering and fruitage of Greece, just in time to carry its seed broadcast over Eastern, Syrian, and Egyptian lands.'[2] Greece also preceded Rome, so that its culture had blossomed before

[1] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*, Letter 101.
[2] *Lux Mundi*, p. 139.

the mighty conquerors began to weld the world into one vast Empire.

Rome was another mighty instrument of Divine Providence. Leo the Great (440–61 A.D.) gave expression to this thought in his sermon 'On the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul.'

> But that the result of this unspeakable grace might be spread abroad throughout the world, God's providence made ready the Roman Empire, whose growth has reached such limits that the whole multitude of nations are brought into close connexion. For the divinely planned work particularly required that many kingdoms should be leagued together under one empire, so that the preaching of the world might quickly reach to all people, when they were held beneath the rule of one State.[1]

Rome had the genius of law and government, the power of discipline and imperial organization, the faculty for conquering nations and subduing nature which knit communities into instruments for heroic tasks, and did much, before the era of invention, to abolish space and distance. Its system of roads linked the most distant provinces to the seat of government. It 'acted as the police, the army, and the navy of the world.' Rome starts the history of Europe, bequeathing 'to the world the mould of government, and the framework of a Church.'[2] George Steward's treatment of this subject is illuminating. The rise of Rome

[1] *Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Sermons of Leo the Great*, No. 82, p. 195.

[2] Wedgwood, *The Moral Ideal*, pp. 240–1.

'from its obscurity to its culminating grandeur was a wonderful chapter in the history of Providence, an augury of some great crisis in the affairs of the world, and a mighty instrument for good or evil to the race.'[1]

As we watch the training of these three races and follow the course of their history, we gain a profoundly impressive picture of the wisdom with which Divine Providence carries out its plans in the life of nations. They worked out their destiny almost in sight of each other around the shores of the Mediterranean. Each people made a mighty contribution to the plan of Providence, though it did not dream of the way in which it was being used. Still less did it dream that its own contribution was but part of a combination of gifts and resources for the spread of a new and world-embracing religion. That finished page in the history of Divine Providence forms a revelation of the wisdom and power of God which rebukes fear and casts out unbelief.

Palestine was an ideal soil for the preparation of the new religion. Its psalmists and prophets made ready the way for Christ. The Jews had a penetrating influence among their neighbours, as both Rome and Alexandria bear witness. Greece, with her schools of philosophy, prepared the intellect to grasp the deeper meanings of the new religion, and gave it a tongue with which to express them. Rome, with her iron rule, brought the nations under discipline, and taught that

[1] *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. 223.

power of submission which 'was ready, when adopted by a new faith, to renew the world.'[1] She also gave facilities of travel which have never been equalled till the last century.

Scarcely had Christianity taken root in the soil prepared for it by the three old-world civilizations than Providence began to reveal designs still more far-reaching. It needed a higher type of character than Greece and Rome had produced.

Christianity itself could not find scope to develop more than half its power, till it came in contact with other than the Greek and Latin minds: the Teutonic genius was needed to give full response to its inwardness and spirituality. There is reason therefore to say, that the earthquake which shook down the ancient polity and culture was no fortuitous outburst of bad force ruining the good, but a subsidence of worn-out strata already denuded of all fruitful soil, and an upheaval of new formations charged with fertilizing capacity for the growth of purer beauty and larger life. The passage from ancient to modern history exhibits the forfeiture of empire by corrupt and unfaithful trustees, and the delivering of the world into more capable and hopeful hands.[2]

For these conquests of Christianity Rome had nobly prepared the way. She seems at first to have sought chiefly to make herself secure and all-powerful in Italy. But Providence led her to wider conquest.

Wars sprang up which she could not avoid, or which she

[1] Wedgwood, *The Moral Ideal*, p. 282.
[2] Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii. 127.

had not expected ; her clients and allies made demands upon her which it was impossible to refuse, and the Senate saw itself committed to the conquest and administration of half the known world, before having definitely made up its mind whether such conquests were advisable or the reverse. But when once there was a large army it was perhaps necessary to go on conquering, and in any case it was not long before the sweets of conquest made themselves felt.[1]

Rome was a mighty conqueror, but she was still more wonderful as a ruler and administrator. Here also Providence guided its instrument. Her administration of the provinces was marked by pliancy and adaptability. Tacitus said the Romans valued the reality of Empire and disregarded its empty show. In Egypt they 'left the religion of the people quite untouched, and Roman governors were not above associating themselves with their ceremonies, and devoutly listening to the miraculous statue of Memnon.'[2]

The Roman rule did not destroy national independence or municipal freedom. The governors had to protect their provinces from invasion.

> Everywhere within the charmed circle of the Roman dominion was peace ; sometimes, it is true, secured by stern measures, as in parts of Britain and in the valley of Aosta ; but as a rule the sternness was reserved for the barbarians without, and the peace was only a blessing to the provincials.[3]

The provinces sometimes suffered greatly from the

[1] W. T. Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration*, p. 107.

[2] Ibid., p. 22.

[3] Ibid., pp. 43–4.

extortion of their governors[1] and the collectors of taxes. Julius Caesar introduced many valuable reforms, which showed 'how fully he had grasped the idea of an equally privileged and homogeneous Empire, and how he sought on the one hand to send Rome into the provinces, and on the other hand to bring the provinces to Rome.'[2]

Augustus and the best of his successors travelled all over their vast empire, exercising strict control over the governors. Rome had her limitations, however. She did not develop self-government.

The provinces could not have defended themselves without Rome; for 200 years Rome defended them: but if a wiser system had been used, if the provincial councils had been made into real parliaments, instead of kept to their so-called religious duties; above all, if there had been a regular and organized representation of the provinces in the central government, Rome and her provinces together might have defended themselves for a thousand years instead of two hundred.[3]

Rome had attempted to rule her vast empire 'without federation and without a representative system, where the only sources of power were the supreme central government and the army.'[4] Those ideas were foreign to antiquity, but they would have gone far to solve the problem of the consolidation of the Empire.

[1] W. T. Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration*, p. 84.

[2] Ibid., p. 100. [3] Ibid., pp. 136–7. [4] Ibid., p. 168.

The fall of Rome is not less wonderful than its rise to world-wide dominion. Its position on the edge of the Mediterranean, its means of rapid communication with the provinces, its large population, and its skilled engineers and powerful generals, all seemed to promise a long career of empire.[1] Yet it became the prey of anarchists and military adventurers. The people were pauperized and robbed of manly independence by the doles of 'a Government which played at being a Universal Providence.'[2] Taxation became crushing, famine and pestilence crippled its resources, and the conqueror of the world fell a prey to hordes of northern invaders.

When Rome was compelled to relax her hold on the provinces, their peoples were left to work out their own destiny. They had learnt much in her stern school. Many of the so-called barbarians were 'half Romanized, often adopting for their own government the *leges Romanae*.'[3] Now they had to practise as best they might what they had learnt. Providence was graciously at work. Its object, as we of a later age can discern, was not merely to guide the history of each race, but to prepare the theatre and the instruments for a task more difficult even than the founding of Christianity—the reign of Christ over the whole world.

It is hard sometimes to trace the activities of

[1] See Pearson, *National Life and Character*, p. 88.
[2] *Spectator*, February 1, 1908, p. 179.
[3] Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration*, p. 268.

Providence as we grope amid the superstitions and the conflicts of the Middle Ages. But when the Renaissance came and new life flowed through the veins of Europe, we begin to see in what direction Providence is at work. Lord Acton describes 'the recovery of the ancient world as the second landmark that divides us from the Middle Ages and marks the transition to modern life. The Renaissance signifies the renewed study of Greek, and the consequences that ensued from it, during the century and a half between Petrarca and Erasmus.'[1]

The new world was thus providentially linked to the old. 'Greece arose from the grave with the New Testament in her hand.' The intellect of Italy awoke, and a great worship of beauty began. 'The Grecian Empire, even in its overthrow in the year 1453, scattered far and wide, like an old falling pine, seed which fell upon a receptive soil.'

Printing had just been invented, scholasticism was being overthrown. Meanwhile Providence was busy in another field. Man's horizon was suddenly widened by the discovery of a new world. That event really eclipsed the Renaissance as a factor in the development and progress of the human race. Portugal has the honour of leading the way along these new paths of providential activity. It had no room for expansion save across the Atlantic, and thus became the birthplace and training-ground for those solitary adventurers who set

[1] *Modern History*, p. 71.

sail from its shores 'with the future of the world in their hands.'[1]

There are few parts in the province of earthly history where it is so strikingly evident how, without any concert, that which is most remote works irresistibly together with great and new designs as in a secret covenant, joined only by the Hand of Providence.[2]

'Providence has hitherto shown a preference for small nations as its instruments.'[3] It is not difficult to understand this. They are more homogeneous than great empires. They are swayed by a common ambition, leavened by a common spirit. They work in harmony, and more readily unite their resources for one general purpose. Israel, Greece, Rome, and the inhabitants of the British Isles have been cited as illustrations of this preference. Holland may be added to the list, where the brave fight for freedom of conscience against the tyranny of Philip II. and the Spanish Inquisition bore such fruit for the world.

When she had trained this country to keep alight the torch of liberty and enlightenment, her *welthistorische* mission was over, and she sank into a second-rate power.[4]

It is as the home of constitutional liberty that England has done large part of her providential work. As we trace the course of events by which she won

[1] Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 52.
[2] Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, i. 70.
[3] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 290.
[4] Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, p. 197.

domestic freedom, despite the tyranny of princes, we clearly see the guiding hand of God. The adverse forces were so mighty, and reasserted themselves so powerfully when it was thought they had been conquered, that the 'constancy of Progress, of progress in the direction of organized and assured freedom, is the characteristic fact of Modern History and its tribute to the theory of Providence.'[1]

Not the least remarkable part of the providential equipment of the northern nations has been their boundless energy and enterprise. The very conditions of existence in these sterner climes have given those who grappled with Nature, 'energy, courage, integrity, and those characteristic qualities which contribute to raise them to a high state of social efficiency.'[2] A distinguished economist says: 'Men of the Anglo-Saxon race in all parts of the world work hard while about it, and do more work in the year than any others.'[3]

Joined to this energy and industry our race has shown a fine-tempered optimism without which it would never have ventured on some of its hardest tasks as an imperial power, or recovered from successive shocks to its schemes in all parts of the earth. Nor must we overlook that broadening tolerance and gift of sympathy which has won the Anglo-Saxon greater triumphs as a governing power than Rome itself ever

[1] Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 11.
[2] Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 57.
[3] Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, i. p. 730.

achieved. England has gained much of her power by her ability to enter into the life of nations whom she has conquered. The Asiatic seems to lack sympathy.

That is the root of all evil in him, the ultimate cause of all the tyrannies, the massacres, and the tortures which from the first have disgraced Asiatic life, and which, as seen alike in Turkey and in China, still continue.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon leaven has found a new world for its influence in the United States and in Canada. We discern a Providence in the grievous errors of the eighteenth century. Our American colonies were too vast to submit to the rule of the mother country; but though they shook off its yoke they retained its temper. Walter Savage Landor says—

We lost Washington, but he was ours, and death gave him back. No man ever encountered such difficulties in politics and war: no man ever adapted one to the other with such skill. In fortitude, justice, and equanimity, no man ever excelled him; no exemplar has been recommended to our gratitude, love, and veneration, by the most partial historian, or the most encomiastic biographer, in which so many and so great virtues, public and private, were united. His name, his manners, his language, his sentiments, his soul were English.[2]

Bishop Creighton visited the United States in 1886.

Perhaps the strongest impression he brought home with him was one of hopefulness. In America it seemed to him

[1] Townsend, *Asia and Europe*, p. 15.
[2] *Charles James Fox*, p. 78.

that the future of the Anglo-Saxon race was assured, and that if in the course of time the influence of England as a world-power should diminish, yet many of the ideas which it was the work of England to express would still prevail through the influence of America.[1]

The abundant life and vigour of the American universities, and their willingness to try experiments, delighted him. 'He felt that they were really trying to grapple with the problems of education, and did not shrink from bold experiment.'

Americans claim to have received from Nature an additional allowance of nervous energy,[2] and it is increasingly manifest, by the tasks that are being set before Canada and the United States, that Providence knows how to employ all their powers in the spread of light and liberty. Lord Shelbourne, in his famous 'sunset speech,' predicted that when America gained independence, 'the sun of England would set, and her glories be eclipsed for ever.'[3] The event has shown how blind was that forecast. It is right to add that the Prime Minister expressed 'his resolution to improve the twilight, and prepare for the rising of England's sun again.'

Some students of modern life are sorely perplexed as to the future of the higher races. It is said that we are training the lower races to take our place. Their

[1] *Life*, i. 367.
[2] Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 57.
[3] Mahon's *History of England*, vii. 204.

numbers are increasing, and they are hemming us in to a portion of the temperate zone.

We cannot change our principles of action. We are bound, wherever we go, to establish peace and order; to make roads, and open up rivers to commerce; to familiarize other nations with a self-government which will one day make them independent of ourselves.[1]

The fear is natural, but is not its sting removed when we realize that Providence is still at work? There are tasks which Nature almost compels the white man to leave to the coloured races. They have their appointed place in the providential order as well as we, and our task is to fit these humbler brethren of ours to fill it. We do not regard ourselves as 'the blind instruments of fate for multiplying the races that are now our subjects, and will one day be our rivals.'[2]

We have carried our sanitary science and engineering skill into these countries. We have saved the races of Africa and India from destroying each other. This is all true. But is it true that they are our rivals? Was not that the mistake of the darker ages? Have we not each our providential task? Shall we not gain prosperity and happiness by fulfilling it and helping the lower races also to fulfil it?

This has been forcibly brought out by a young thinker. The underlying assumption in Mr. Pearson's argument is that the lower races are permanently

[1] Pearson, *National Life and Character*, p. 13.
[2] Ibid., p. 83.

to remain lower races, and either that their contributions to the ennobling of man's destiny are, and always will be, negligible, or else that our main concern is not with the maintenance of higher principles and wider views of life, but with the perpetuation of our particular variety of humanity. . . . If the coming lords of the earth are to be ethically superior to ourselves, their attainment of political supremacy is a thing to be welcomed without shrinking.[1]

The relation between the various races of the world is a subject of engrossing interest.

It is historically evident that some nations, some persons, some periods of time, some series of events, have influenced much more than others the spiritual development of mankind. If we compare from this point of view the Greeks and the Phoenicians, Plato and Xenophon, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or the Roman and the Mongol empires, we shall see the difference between the main stream and a backwater. But if this inequality cannot be denied, neither can the possibility that God's general providence over the world may culminate in some more special spiritual development of a part of the world. There is nothing against it but the assumption which was too rash for Matthew Tindal, that God is bound in justice to give equal light to all men. The world is not such a dead level as this. Some persons or peoples must be more fitted than others to receive the revelation—or to discover the truth—which needs next to be known at a given time. Such fitness will not of necessity imply a higher degree of *general* moral excellence. The difference may be made by some special delicacy of feeling, grasp of mind, or force of will, according to its nature. The Jews, for instance, are described as bad receivers, because they were a stiff-necked people, and slow

[1] Alston, *The White Man's Work in Asia and Africa*, pp. 117–18.

to learn; but they must also have been good receivers, because they were a stiff-necked people, and slow to forget. So too we can see special qualities (apart from any general moral excellence) which may at various times have fitted the Greeks, the Romans, or the English to take the part they plainly have taken in the development of human thought on things divine.[1]

No modern writer has thrown more light on this study of Providence in history than Lord Acton. In his letter outlining the scheme for his *Cambridge Modern History*, he describes universal history as moving 'in a succession to which the nations are subsidiary,' and says—

Their story will be told, not for their own sake, but in reference and subordination to a higher series, according to the time and the degree in which they contribute to the common fortunes of mankind.

Southey was of that mind when he made Montesinos say—

An excellent friend of mind, one of the wisest, best, and happiest men whom I have ever known, delights in this manner to trace the moral order of Providence through the revolutions of the world; and in his historical writings he keeps it in view as the pole star of his course.[2]

The study of Providence in history grows more impressive as it comes nearer to our own times. Modern history is

a narrative told of ourselves, the record of a life which is our own, of efforts not yet abandoned to repose, of problems

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 133-4.

[2] *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*, No. 2.

that still entangle the feet and vex the heart of men. Every part of it is weighty with innumerable lessons that we must learn by experience and at a great price, if we know not how to profit by the example and teaching of those who have gone before us, in a society largely resembling the one we live in.[1]

Disregard of the rights of others is as great a sin in a nation as in an individual. Luther spoke of the Turk as the personified wrath of God, and the curbing of Spain's power was the salvation of Europe.

Nations, then, are instruments in the hands of Providence. Each has its place in the divine scheme, its special relation to all the rest. The object for which they are used is their own uplifting, not merely in physical and intellectual progress but also in the moral and spiritual scale, and the uplifting of the whole race. George Steward, in his noble work on *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, suggests that the story of Babel should be read in the light of St. Paul's declaration on Mars' Hill—

for the lesson taught us by the confusion of tongues seems to be the necessity foreseen by Providence of breaking up the human stock into new national centres, their settlement in separate territories, and the advancement of the common weal by an arrangement bearing the force of a perpetual law, in opposition to the predilections of patriarchy, and the dreams of modern cosmopolitans. . . . The Plan of Providence is to preserve the race from stagnation and effeteness, by planting in it the principles of constant but

[1] Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 8.

orderly change. Races are moulded or extinguished by intercourse with others. Nations rise and fall, not as monotonous cycles of events, but by laws of Providence, giving them births and doomsdays, much on the same principle as it does individuals.[1]

Providence requires its chosen instruments to be always ready for a new march along the road towards the highest things. There must be no loss of energy or of power of adaptation to the varying conditions of service. Races fade away when they cease to serve the purpose of Providence, and there are always good reasons for their disappearance. If they block the path of moral and intellectual and spiritual advance, they are doomed. Dr. Arnold says—

All the world is, by the very law of its creation, in eternal progress; and the cause of all the evils of the world may be traced to that natural, but most deadly error of human intolerance and corruption, that our business is to preserve and not to improve.[2]

It is a great art for the historian to discern these workings of Providence. Professor Bonamy Price, writing of Dr. Arnold, says—

God's dealings with any particular generation of men are but the application of the eternal truths of His providence to their particular circumstances, and the form of that application has at different times greatly varied. Here it was that Arnold's most characteristic eminence lay. He seemed to possess the true χάρισμα, the very spiritual gift

[1] *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. pp. 67–8.
[2] *Life*, i. 259.

of γνῶσις, having an insight not only into the actual form of the religion of any single age, but into the meaning and substance of God's moral government generally; a vision of the eternal principles by which it is guided; and such a profound understanding of their application, as to be able to set forth God's manifold wisdom, as manifested at divers times, and under circumstances of the most opposite kind.[1]

A survey of the history of the world is a great help to faith in a gracious guidance of human affairs.

That the providence exercised over the childhood of humanity did its work well is evidenced by the goodly manhood it reached in the earliest civilizations, of which ancient history, and still more ancient unearthed monuments, bear record: those of India, Egypt, China, Babylon, with their language, arts, wisdoms, religions; imperfect, rude in many respects, yet not without elements of real, permanent value.[2]

We are not blind to the darker sides of history, yet we cannot fail to discern wonderful progress.

Taking long periods, we perceive the advance of moral over material influence, the triumph of general ideas, the gradual amendment. The line of march will prove, on the whole, to have been from force and cruelty to consent and association, to humanity, rational persuasion, and the persistent appeal to common, simple, and evident maxims.[3]

This onward march is a growing proof of Providence in the history of nations. A keen student of society says—

We behold the whole drama of progress in life becoming

[1] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*, chap. iv.
[2] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 167.
[3] Acton, *Modern History*, p. 33.

instinct, as it were, with a meaning which remains continually projected beyond the content of the present.[1]

This could never have been accomplished without an overruling Providence. We see that the progress might have been much more continuous and extended if men had followed God's leading. Human passion and ambition have often made shipwreck of the world's peace and clogged its progress; yet, however retarded, it has moved onward, and in the right direction.

Again and again the retrogressive elements become terribly dangerous, they reach the very brink of disastrous success; but the final struggle invariably vindicates the providence of God, and furthers the highest welfare of mankind.[2]

History thus gives a general view, a wider horizon for our study of Providence. The survey of a single lifetime brings out much that was hidden from us when we studied a detached event, but history extends the survey over many generations. The judgement of the wisest may be at fault when only a portion of the providential design is seen.

In history things get beaten out to their true issues. The strands of thought that are incompatible with each other get separated; conflicting tendencies, at first unperceived, are brought to light; opposite one-sidednesses correct each other; and the true consequences of theories reveal themselves with inexorable necessity.[3]

[1] Kidd, *Principles of Western Civilization*, p. 51.
[2] Watkinson, *The Supreme Conquest*, p. 28.
[3] Dr. Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, pp. 55–6.

God's plan thus shines out in contradistinction to that of man. He is on the side of moral and spiritual progress. Providence in the life of nations has some pages which illuminate all the rest. The spectacle of Israel, Greece, and Rome preparing the way for Christ

awakens in the mind a sense of awe, as if here the broad, obscure page of history suddenly became luminous with divine meaning. But surely if God has so acted once in history, He has done it again and again, whenever any great and momentous crisis in the progress of that same gospel has drawn near. The *Praeparatio Evangelica* is no solitary incident of the divine government of the world.[1]

The world moves, and it moves towards truth and goodness. History converges towards a glorious end when God's will shall be the law of life for all His creatures. We may sum all up in the words of Lord Acton—

I hope that even this narrow and disedifying section of history will aid you to see that the action of Christ who is risen on mankind whom He redeemed fails not, but increases; that the wisdom of divine rule appears not in the perfection but in the improvement of the world; and that achieved liberty is the one ethical result that rests on the converging and combined conditions of advancing civilization. Then you will understand what a famous philosopher said, that History is the true demonstration of Religion.[2]

George Steward shows how 'the national form of human life signally consists with mediational truths.

[1] Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World.*
[2] Acton, *Modern History*, pp. 11–12.

This seems the most gracious expedient for retrieving the original benediction, "Replenish the earth and subdue it." As an organism fitted to occupy and improve territory, to elicit all the more hidden resources of nature, to expand the human faculties, and to elevate man to his original position as lord of the world, national life is the ordinance of providential goodness, and the orb of providential wisdom. Government, commerce, agriculture, arts, sciences, and civic economy—all things that advance and perfect man socially and intellectually—take their rise from this source. . . . Christ is the universal National Head; and the principles and spirit of His religion are the perfection of national rule.'[1]

[1] *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. 84–5.

IX

PROVIDENCE IN CHURCH HISTORY

But the gracious providence of Almighty God hath I trust put these thorns of contradiction in our sides, lest that should steal upon the Church in a slumber, which now I doubt not but through His assistance may be turned away from us, bending thereunto ourselves with constancy.—HOOKER'S *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Ep. Dedicatory, p. 9.

Were we permitted, indeed, to witness a perfectly restored and united Church on a scale commensurate with the bounds of modern Christendom, the conversion of the world must, humanly speaking, become an event at no distant day.—STEWARD, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. 322.

The study of Modern History is, next to Theology itself, and only next in so far as Theology rests on a divine revelation, the most thoroughly religious training that the mind can receive. It is no paradox to say that Modern History, including Mediaeval History in the term, is co-extensive in its field of view, in its habits of criticism, in the persons of its most famous students, with Ecclesiastical History.—STUBBS, *Lectures*.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Special providence in the choice of St. Paul	187
Providential victory of Christian truth	189
The Church of the Fourth Century	190
The leaven of Christianity spreads among the barbarians	191
Providence in English Christianity	192
Religion adapted to the soil	193
Missionary work in and around York	194
Victory of Mohammedanism in the East	196
The Church of the Middle Ages	197
Influence of St. Francis	197
The work of the Lollards and Wyclif	198
Desire for reform within the Roman Church	199
The Reformation and Luther	199
The English Reformation	201
Influence of Erasmus	201
Providence in the Evangelical Revival	203
Methodism a Providential Mosaic	204
The Wesleys and Whitefield	205
Methodist history after Wesley's death	206
Forms of Church life developed to meet varying needs of Society	208
A humbling yet inspiring record	208

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Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History;* Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity;* E. Dale, *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature;* Bede, *Ecclesiastical History;* Acton, *Lectures on Modern History;* Lindsay, *Luther and the German Reformation*, and *History of the Reformation.*

IX

THE Providence of God is nowhere more evident than in the history of the Church. Christianity itself was a providential scheme which we cannot fully appreciate till we realize 'in how many ways the gospel formed a link in a chain' of circumstance shaped by divine wisdom.[1] Peter is a providential man. He is trained for his part on the Day of Pentecost, and fills it nobly as a fearless, whole-hearted witness for his Master. Peter, however, was neither fitted by birth nor education for carrying the gospel into the world of Greek and Roman civilization. That task required a scholar in sympathy with the intellectual life of Athens and Corinth, and able to hold his ground against every antagonist whom he might meet in Ephesus and Rome. For such tasks Saul of Tarsus was Christ's chosen vessel. Professor Ramsay refers to the 'peculiar suitability of Tarsus to educate and mould the mind of him who should in due time make the religion of the Jewish race intelligible to the Graeco-Roman world, and should be able to raise that world up to the moral level of the Hebrew people and

[1] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 1.

the spiritual level of ability to sympathize with the Hebrew religion in its perfected stage.'[1]

Tarsus was a famous centre of Greek culture, where the mind of the future apostle was unconsciously leavened by larger thoughts; and the Jewish rabbi at whose feet he was brought up in Jerusalem had a singularly wide outlook and large tolerance, as the Acts of the Apostles bears witness. By a wonderful interposition of Providence, St. Paul was enlisted in the service of the Christian Church. He himself never ceased to marvel at the transformation of his life, and Christian men of every age have shared his wonder. He is pre-eminently the providential man of the apostolic age, 'an intellectual giant compared with the rest,' and one who 'laboured more than all.'[2] Wherever he goes he proves himself a worthy champion of the new faith. He is free from bigotry. He is in sympathy with the universal quest of God, which he discerns amid idolatry and superstition. In Ephesus he spent three years of unrivalled influence; in Athens he was able to unfold a view of Divine Providence which still enthrals the imagination and gives expression to our loftiest ideas of national history. His temper is cosmopolitan. He traces God in the religious and the national life of the world. Before Felix and Festus, before Agrippa and Nero, he is a noble representative of the new faith. His life

[1] *The Cities of St. Paul*, p. 88.

[2] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 38.

culminates in Rome, where even his bonds become a providential means of spreading his message.

St. Paul's influence has never ceased to deepen and expand. His Epistles have shaped the whole course of Christian thought. There is no department of theology which does not bear his stamp. He had emphatically the mind of Christ. Absolutely loyal to the gospel, he opens up its meaning and shows its manifold applications to human life in a way possible to no other leader in the early Church, save perhaps to the martyr whose mantle fell on his shoulders.

The career of St. Paul is wonderful, and it is most wonderful that so mighty and original a genius did not break the Church asunder but only widened it.[1]

Dr. Percy Gardner describes the process by which Christian ideas prevailed as the baptism of Judaea and Hellas and Rome. The early Christians were 'often narrow, sometimes unjust' in relation to the beliefs and morals of the heathen world, but they had faith in their mission. Jewish morality was baptized by Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, which represents the best current morality of Israel, 'in part rejected, and in part carried further, made deeper and broader, more spiritual and more human, by the introduction of . . . inwardness as opposed to formality, and an abiding sense of a close relation to an indwelling spiritual power.'[2]

[1] Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity*, pp. 28–9.
[2] Ibid., p. 64.

The relations of the new religion to Hellas were not speedily fixed, but a process of baptism began with St. Paul and the Fourth Gospel which is scarcely yet complete. Roman institutions and the Christian religion were drawn closer through contact with 'the loosely organized but individually powerful Teutons.'[1] The capacity to meet new and unforeseen conditions is a striking evidence of the Divine Providence that shaped the course of Primitive Christianity. 'Through the unconscious leaders of the Church, the ever-living spirit of Christ worked to ends of which they did not dream.'[2]

The fourth century furnishes a vantage-point from which the Providence that guides the Church may be surveyed. In one sense she had won her victory over the world. Constantine, with all his blemishes, was an instrument of Providence who allowed himself to be borne along the path which led the Church to new power and influence. Persecution ceased. The constancy of the martyrs, the purity and unselfishness of lowly men and women who trod in the steps of Christ, had shamed the hardness and profligacy of those times. Victory brought graver perils and fiercer tests. Emperors and empresses aspired to shape Christian teaching; worldly ambition crept into the Church's councils. But Providence had its great men ready. Athanasius fought the battle against Arianism in the Council of

[1] Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity*, p. 165.
[2] Ibid., p. 168.

Nicaea; Ambrose preserved the city of Milan from the Arian contagion, and fearlessly exercised discipline on a Roman emperor. St. Jerome's learning bore fruit for many generations in the Vulgate. St. Augustine moulded Christian theology. When civilization and religion were endangered by the barbarian invasion of Italy, the Church proved a mighty bulwark. St. Augustine, in his *Civitas Dei*, written after the sack of Rome, saw that her visible empire had been allowed to perish in order that the great spiritual Kingdom might be established.

In the midst of the universal wreck of Western civilization the Christian Church alone stood erect, and ready to face the darkening future of the world. Some prophetic instinct—or shall we call it Providence?—had long been gathering into the Church the various powers needed for the thousand years of conflict which no man had foreseen.[1]

The barbarians who sacked Rome were no strangers to the gospel. It had already laid its yoke upon them and tamed their passions, so that whilst Alaric destroyed the temples, the churches of Rome were sacred in his eyes. Some of the Gothic tribes already professed Christianity. They had carried off Christian prisoners in their raids, especially from Cappadocia. These captives saw their providential opportunity, and became missionaries among the barbarians, who accepted the new faith. Other teachers were sent for. Ulfilas,

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 78.

with prophetic instinct, translated the Bible into their language, and the work spread. Jerome watched the triumphs from his retirement in Bethlehem with eager interest.

> Lo, the Armenian lays down his quiver; the Huns are learning the Psalter; the frosts of Scythia glow with the warmth of faith; the ruddy armies of the Goths bear about with them the tabernacles of the Church; and therefore, perhaps, do they fight with equal fortune against us, because they trust in the religion of Christ equally with us.[1]

The greatness of Rome's institutions impressed its conquerors. 'The glory of the world which had perished was reflected on her face.'[2] 'They craved for a development and civilization for themselves equal in all respects to that upon which they had descended from the north.'[3]

Christianity thus recommended itself to the barbarians. 'Their leaders instinctively perceived its immense value as a political and social institution, much more highly developed than anything they themselves possessed; and on that account they first began to embrace its precepts.'[4]

When Augustine appeared in Kent, Ethelbert honoured him as a representative of the power which

[1] Epis. 107, 2.

[2] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 175.

[3] E. Dale, *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature*, p. 63.

[4] Ibid., p. 63.

had built roads and cities in Britain. He and his people were thus brought into contact with the civilization of Rome. The Teutonic invaders of England had not been influenced by Christianity like others of their race. 'In England, for many years, they held to the old heathenism and nature-worship, to the old mythology, to the old sacrificial and ceremonial rites.'[1]

But their hour of opportunity came in due time. Providence watched over the early days of English Christianity. Pope Gregory dealt wisely with the superstitious Saxons. In a letter to the Abbot Mellitus, who was going to Britain in 601 A.D., he directs that the idol temples should not be destroyed, but 'converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God.' Instead of the heathen sacrifices there were to be religious festivals, in which the people might glorify God and return thanks to the Giver of all things for their abundance.

> For there is no doubt that it is impossible to cut off everything at once from their rude natures; because he who endeavours to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps.[2]

The new faith thus took root more firmly.

In fact, the Englishman seems to have read himself, his own motives, his own instincts, his own life, thought, and

[1] E. Dale, *National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature*, p. 61.

[2] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I. xxx.

character, into his new religion; and the more sincerely religious he became, the greater was often the change from the apostolic ideal.[1]

The problem so often presented on the modern mission-field faced these workers in Britain, and the result of the Pope's prudent counsel was soon manifest.

The Englishman made Christianity his own, and gave it a form which especially appealed to him; and thus the final victory of the faith was assured. As time went by, the impression made went very deep; and the influence of the conversion upon both character and social life became exceedingly great. A deeper charity towards the unfortunate, and even the criminal, was inculcated, to be increased still more by the gentle teaching of the pious Aidan and the monks of Iona; and an organized attack was made upon all that was harsh and brutal in the national temperament.[2]

The best work of Christianity has been done with the minimum of unsettlement. Certain channels were already open, through which the new life began to flow. The transition was thus made more gradual, though such a course had its manifest dangers.

York had been the military stronghold and the centre of civilization in the days of the Romans, and it retained its position under the Saxons. When Gregory learned from Augustine 'that the harvest which he had was great and the labourers but few,' he sent him a company of helpers, among whom was

[1] Dale, *National Life*, p. 74.
[2] Ibid., p. 74.

Paulinus, destined by Providence to become the missionary of Northumbria. In 625 Ethelburga left Kent to marry Edwin. Bede says—

> Paulinus, a man beloved of God, was ordained bishop [on July 21, 625], to go with her, and by daily exhortations, and celebrating the heavenly Mysteries, to confirm her and her company, lest they should be corrupted by intercourse with the pagans.

The queen's chaplain did not journey northward in vain. On Easter Eve, April 12, 627, the king was baptized at York in a timber church dedicated to St. Peter, which had been erected in haste. As soon as he was baptized he began to build around this a larger and nobler church of stone, whose site is marked by the choir of the present minster. The building was still unfinished when the king died six years later. Paulinus meanwhile was evangelizing the surrounding region. The king was as zealous in winning converts as the bishop. That was a golden age. Bede says that a woman might walk through Edwin's dominions with her new-born babe without receiving any harm. When the king was slain in battle in 633 at the age of forty-eight, his head was brought to York and buried in his new church. Paulinus returned to Kent with the queen. Providence had guided his steps and made his work fruitful. He had laid the foundation for the spread of Christian truth in the North. Hilda, the famous abbess of Whitby, was one of his converts, and became the trusted guide of kings, princes, and bishops.

The great missionary, Cuthbert, was consecrated Bishop of Lindisfarne in 685 at York.

Egbert, who had been a pupil of Bede's, became Bishop of York in 735. He founded a school in the city, the library of which was famous throughout Europe. Bede paid him a short visit here. Alcuin, the greatest scholar of his day, was teacher in the bishop's school, which he left for Charlemagne's dominions. The emperor himself became one of his pupils.[1]

As we survey this period we see how the leaven worked. All the forces of the new religion were arrayed against the national drunkenness. The Church tamed men's passions, and 'laboured for quietness and peace.' England thus became a home of learning and a centre of missionary zeal.

If we turn from Britain to the old homes of Christian civilization, we find that the Eastern Church of the seventh century failed to stem the tide of Mohammedanism. It had spent its strength in speculations as to abstruse questions of divinity, and glorified monasticism as the noblest means for cultivating the Christian life. The alliance between religion and morality was dissolved, and 'the ground literally disappeared from under the feet of Eastern Christendom at the moment when it imagined itself to have come near to God.'[2]

[1] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book ii.

[2] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 148.

The worship of saints and angels, with all manner of superstition, degraded both the people and their leaders. As to the government of the Church, John Wesley was justified in his scathing censure on the Councils. 'Surely Mahometanism was let loose to reform the Christians! I know not but Constantinople has gained by the change.'[1]

The Papacy had its days of pride and glory when princes quailed before its interdicts. But that road did not lead to enduring influence.

> Towards the end of the Middle Ages the Church was visibly disorganized by its victory over the world. It had forsaken its proper function as a witness and keeper, and became a judge and divider; and the task had overstrained and demoralized it. . . . The good they [the Popes] did was far outweighed by the moral scandal of their rapacity, treachery, base use of sacred things, and evil living generally.[2]

There were noble witnesses for better things. St. Francis of Assisi, the saint of gentleness, was a gift of Providence for a hard age when religion was being banished to cloisters, and nobles and soldiers lived for pleasure and for glory. Wherever the Dominicans gained a footing the Franciscans seemed to be led to labour. 'It was a clear sign of a divine Providence that they did.'[3] The hard intellectualism of the

[1] *Journal*, August 5, 1754.
[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 203.
[3] Maurice, *Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 166.

Dominicans was corrected by the superstition of the Franciscan. 'If each held down some truth, each brought some side of truth into light which its rival would have crushed.'[1] The Church of these days was outwardly and visibly triumphant in a degree which she has seldom surpassed. 'It was the age of St. Francis and of St. Louis, of Bonaventura and of Thomas Aquinas, of Pope Innocent III and of Dante.'[2]

The Lollards were bearing their witness, and Wyclif, in his opposition to the Papal claims, in his protest against the abuse of the monastic life, in his appeal to the Bible, in his spiritual view of the Sacraments, even in his positive doctrines, saw beyond all other men the deep needs of the age and the future of spiritual religion.[3]

Worldly ambition marred the influence of the Roman Church, yet we must not overlook this brighter side. The way was being prepared for better things.

It seems the rule in Providence to afford a prelude to great changes, like a porch to a building, an overture to a musical composition; thus Wyclif preceded the Reformation; Hus, Luther; John, Christ.[4]

A spirit of expectation was abroad. The hunger for a more spiritual religion became keen. Everything that Lord Acton says about this period has double interest as the witness of a Romanist and a scholar.

[1] Maurice, *Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 166.
[2] Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity*, p. 194.
[3] Ibid., p. 217.
[4] Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life.*

During the latter part of the Middle Ages the desire for reform of the Church was constant. It was strongest and most apparent among laymen, for a famous monastic writer of the fourteenth century testified that the laity led better lives than the clergy. To the bulk of ordinary Christians reform meant morality in the priesthood. It became intolerable to them to see the Sacrament administered habitually by sacrilegious hands, or to let their daughters go to confession to an unclean priest. The discontent was deepest where men were best. They felt that the Organization provided for the Salvation of Souls was serving for their destruction, and that the more people sought the means of grace in the manner provided, the greater risk they incurred of imbibing corruption.[1]

The Reformation had its galaxy of providential men, among whom Luther still shines as the sun. Lord Acton describes him 'as a profound conservative and a reluctant innovator, who felt the fascination that belongs to lapse of time.'[2] He is puzzled that a man of such a spirit should have been so insensible to the overtures made him by Rome.

Luther at Worms is the most pregnant and momentous fact in our history, and the problem is to know why he so rigidly repelled the advances of the confessor, of the Chancellor of Baden, and the Elector of Treves? Was it simply the compelling logic of Protestantism, or was there some private saltpetre of his own, a programme drawn from his personality and habits of mind? There was no question at issue which had not either been pronounced by him insufficient for separation, or which was not abandoned afterwards, or

[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 90.
[2] Ibid., p. 95.

modified in a Catholic sense by the moderating hand of Melanchthon.[1]

There was a Providence in the distrust which held Luther aloof from the Papacy. He had his manifest limitations. Professor Lindsay says his dislike and distrust of the 'common man,' due to the Peasants' War, 'led him to bind his reformation in the fetters of a secular control, to the extent of regarding the secular government as having a quasi-episcopal function. He did his best within Germany to prevent attempts to construct anything like a democratic Church government.'[2]

His inability to understand or appreciate the heroic Zwingli and his followers 'worked many an evil to the German Reformation, and produced much of the disasters of the horrible Thirty Years' War.'[3] His failure

to see the promise and potency of life which lay in the rude strivings of the 'common man' marred his reforming work, and still paralyses the European portions of the Church which bears his name. These and other defects may have nevertheless aided him in doing what he did accomplish. He was not too far before his contemporaries to prevent them seeing his footprints and following in his steps.[4]

Yet with all his limitations the peasant's son was mighty for his providential mission. 'Luther

[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 101.
[2] *Luther and the German Reformation*, p. 189.
[3] Ibid., p. 189.
[4] Ibid., p. 264.

occasioned the greatest revolution which Western Europe has ever seen, and he ruled it till his death. History shows no other man with such kingly power.'[1]

He gathered up all the forces of the German people, its princes, scholars, citizens, and peasants, and used them to set his countrymen free from their subserviency to the Church of Rome.[2]

In our own country the struggle took its form from the national genius.

This is the broad distinction between the Continental Reformation and the contemporary event in England. The one was the strongest religious movement in the history of Christendom; the other was borne onward on the crest of a wave not less overwhelming, the state that admits no division of power. Therefore, when the spirit of foreign Protestantism caught the English people they moved on lines distinct from those fixed by the Tudors; and the reply of the seventeenth century to the sixteenth was not a development, but a reaction. Whereas Henry could exclude, or impose, or change religion at will with various aid from the gibbet, the block, or the stake, there were some among the Puritans who enforced, though they did not discover, the contrary principle, that a man's conscience is his castle, with kings and parliaments at a respectful distance.[3]

The intellectual side of the Reformation finds its central figure in Erasmus. 'He was eminently an international character; and was the first European who lived in intimacy with other ages besides his own,

[1] Lindsay, *Luther and the German Reformation*, p. 265.
[2] See Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 254.
[3] Lord Acton, *Modern History*, pp. 142–3.

and could appreciate the gradual ripening and enlargement of ideas.'[1]

He was at first a scholar rather than a divine.

In later life the affairs of religion absorbed him, and he lived for the idea that the reform of the Church depended on a better knowledge of early Christianity, in other words, on better self-knowledge, which could only result from a slow and prolonged literary process.[2]

Printing had been discovered for sixty years, and 24,000 works had issued from the press, some of them more than a hundred times, before any one thought of printing the Greek Testament. Erasmus published his first edition in 1516. Luther used it for his translation. Erasmus boasted that 'Letters had remained Pagan in Italy, until he taught them to speak of Christ.' He wished to replace systematic theology by spiritual religion, and was anxious for the reform of abuses in the Church.

In later days he was one of the first writers put on the Index. But throughout his career as a divine, that is, for the last quarter of a century that he lived, he was consistently protected, defended, consulted by Popes, until Paul III offered him a Cardinal's hat and desired that he would settle at Rome. He told Leo X that he thought it a mistake to censure Luther, with whom he agreed as to many of the matters calling for reform. But whilst Luther attributed the prevailing demoralization to false dogmas and a faulty constitution, Erasmus sought the cause in

[1] Acton, *Modern History*, 'The Renaissance.'
[2] Ibid.

ignorance and misgovernment. . . . Erasmus belonged, intellectually, to a later and more scientific or rational age. The work which he had initiated, and which was interrupted by the Reformation troubles, was resumed at a more acceptable time by the scholarship of the seventeenth century.[1]

The need for reform was not only felt by Luther and Erasmus. Many enlightened members of the Church of Rome shared their feeling. The Council of Trent had a providential opportunity which it allowed to slip through its fingers.

The eighteenth century witnessed that providential Revival which prepared this country for a vast extension of its prosperity and influence. Our chief historians acknowledge that the victories won by Marlborough and Wolfe, the inventions of Arkwright and Watt, which made the century memorable, yield in importance to the religious revolution brought about by the preaching of the Wesleys and Whitefield. Methodism was used by Providence to save England from the revolutionary temper which laid France in ruins. Cardinal Newman says—

It has happened before now, that comparatively retired posts have been filled by those who have exerted the most extensive influence over the destinies of religion in the times following them; as in the acts and pursuits of this world, the great benefactors of mankind are frequently unknown.[2]

[1] Acton, *Modern History*, pp. 88–9.
[2] *University Sermons*, p. 98.

That tribute to obscure lives finds notable illustration in the story of Susanna Wesley. She is emphatically the providential woman of the eighteenth century. To be the mother of the Wesleys and the mother of Methodism was a mighty calling and election for the wife of a Lincolnshire vicar, burdened with debts and no stranger to a prison. She made her children Methodists from the cradle. Life was ordered and shaped to obedience, prayerfulness, courtesy, diligence, punctuality in the schoolroom. Her sound judgement guided John Wesley in his inquiries at Oxford; her example taught him to care for the souls of his neighbours, and in some of the critical moments of the Evangelical Revival she proved a voice of God to her son.

Methodism itself may fitly be described as a providential mosaic. It did not spring fully shaped and equipped for its mission from Wesley's brain and heart. One step after another was taken with fear and trembling; one institution after another was added as events arose which called it forth. Field-preaching, class-leaders, the financial organization, lay preachers, watchnight services—to each Wesley was gradually led by following the order of Providence. He did not seek out these things. The event revealed them. God forced them on his notice. His glory was that he was prompt to follow the path that opened. The human Providence, as embodied in the clear brain and big heart of John Wesley, is a study of never-

failing interest. He was a creature of many prejudices born of his churchmanship, his education, and his temperament, but his prejudices always gave way to truth. His mind was a miracle of candour, and to his dying day he was a scholar in the school of Providence.

No one man could fulfil all the designs of Providence even for Methodism. Charles Wesley is no less a providential man than his brother. The memorable *Obituary* in the Minutes of Conference for 1788, still fills us with astonishment. 'His least praise was his talent for poetry.' Yet that is the gift by which he has done so much to shape the religious life, not only of Methodism, but of the world. By the use he made of that talent he has become one of the spiritual forces, not of a century, but of all time.

George Whitefield's contribution to the Revival was that of the mighty orator who charmed the crowd and made all men flock to hear the new teaching. Nor were the early Methodist preachers and class-leaders less emphatically instruments of Providence. The world despised them as it did the Apostles, but the triumphs of grace which followed their labours showed that God had a mighty work to accomplish through these lowly instruments in all parts of the kingdom.

Wesley saw that the Evangelical Revival was rich in promise. 'I make no doubt that Methodism is designed by Providence to introduce the approaching millennium.' That saying proved truer than he knew. Providence

lengthened his days in order that he might deepen his hold on England, and perfect his work.

The great length of John Wesley's life was of incalculable advantage to Methodism and to spiritual Christianity; for it perpetuated the organization, and admitted of all possible experiments, the rejection of failures, and the improvement of methods worthy of permanent adoption. This was done under an autocratic authority inspired by one desire, the promotion of Christ's kingdom; an authority which lost no influence by confessions of error or change, and was superior to opposition by reason of his financial grasp upon the property of the Connexion and his control of appointments.[1]

Some anxious years followed Wesley's departure. But the providence of God guided Methodism. There was much talk in those days of the 'Old Plan,' which some understood to mean adhesion to the Church of England. Pawson and Atmore replied, 'Not so; our old plan has been to follow the openings of Providence, and to alter or amend as we saw it needful, in order to be more useful in the hand of God.'

That was the method pursued, and the results have been an extension of the sphere and influence of Methodism that is scarcely short of world-wide. Men who have discovered the path of Providence and followed its leading have never been lacking. Dr. Coke was a priceless gift of God to our opening mission-field, and such names as those of Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson, Adam Clarke, Robert Newton are memorable

[1] Buckley, *History of Methodists in the United States*, p. 278.

in Methodist history. Nor can we overlook more recent names—William Arthur, Hugh Price Hughes, Dr. Stephenson, Thomas Champness, Charles Garrett, and others. Time will reveal the full significance of these personal contributions to the plans of Providence. But we watch the work of God moving forward both at home and abroad, and we know that His own gracious Providence is directing every form of service, not in Methodism alone, but in all branches of the Church of Christ.

We dare cast no stone at the Church of England for its failure to use Wesley and Methodism. It would have been hard to embrace the vigorous young societies in the staid Mother Church, and it is not unfair to argue that Providence had other and wiser designs. Wesley, notwithstanding his protestations and prejudices, was led on by events till he took that step of ordaining Coke and others which Lord Mansfield rightly described as 'separation' from the Church of England. Methodism had grown too big for its cradle, and its mission could never have been accomplished had it been bound to the State Church.

General Booth, one of its zealous local preachers, was lost to Wesleyan Methodism, as at a later date he was lost to the New Connexion. There also we trace the Providence that guides the Church's service. The worker needed a wider field, a freer hand than Methodism was then ready to offer him, and the result is one over which Christian men rejoice. In accepting

William Booth's offer of marriage, Catherine Mumford says—

> I often anticipate the glorious employment of investigating the mysterious workings of Divine Providence. Oh, may it be our happy lot to assist each other in those heavenly researches in that pure, bright world above ![1]

It seems a legitimate conclusion from the facts we have passed in review, that special forms of Church life are developed to meet the varying needs of succeeding generations. Puritanism rose when the spirit of liberty was firing the blood and brain of England; Methodism was born when the nation was making a great leap towards world-wide empire, and the common people were beginning to win prosperity and influence. In our own generation the social side of Church life has been developed in a manner unknown to our fathers. The care of orphan and destitute children, the effort to reach the degraded, the submerged, and the criminal classes, are among the chief glories of Christianity to-day. We have evidence at every stage of Church history of the guidance of Divine Providence. The Church has risen to its task as God opened its eyes and raised up His chosen vessels.

There have been grievous failures. The story which Church history unfolds is more humbling to Christian men than the mistakes and tyranny of which civil history is full. The contrast between the divine and the human providence is painful. Pascal tells how

[1] Coates, *The Prophet of the Poor*, p. 29.

Athanasius was condemned in Councils, and with the assent of all the bishops and the Pope. 'Those who have both zeal and knowledge are excommunicated by the Church and yet save the Church.' Lord Acton does not fail to point out this flaw in Calvin's rule.

The volume which cost Servetus his life was burnt with him; but, falling from his neck into the flames, it was snatched from the burning, and may still be seen in its singed condition, a ghastly memorial of Reformation ethics, in the National Library at Paris.[1]

Yet despite these black pages the record is inspiring. The Church has been the foremost champion of the oppressed, the friend of the poor, the suffering, the degraded, the inspirer of a thousand noble efforts for the good of the world. Its stamp is on all life.

There is not much good in modern civilization which is not either originated by Christianity or assimilated by it. Even its enemies owe most of their best things to it. Some truth there must be in this unique phenomenon; for if we found, after all, that the guiding Power has allowed the main development of religion in history to go on altogether mistaken lines, we might have to revise our assumption that such Power is morally trustworthy.[2]

The power which the Church has shown 'of constantly renewing her youth, reverting to the original type, and setting out on a new career,'[3] is sufficient evidence that

[1] Acton, *Modern History*, p. 135.
[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 287.
[3] Gardner, *The Growth of Christianity*, p. 219.

Divine Providence has guided and shaped all its history. That Providence is still at work. One aspect of European life to-day is specially encouraging in this regard. Russia, amid the revolutionary struggles of our day, has at last given liberty of worship to her people, and 'so has made it possible for the gospel to melt the sluggish mass of a Greek Catholicism steeped in picture-worship. Here, if anywhere, a great hour has dawned.'[1]

[1] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 344.

X

PROVIDENCE IN MISSIONARY SERVICE

And Providence's designing to place some in greater darkness with respect to religious knowledge, is no more a reason why they should not endeavour to get out of that darkness and others to bring them out of it, than why ignorant and slow people in matters of other knowledge should not endeavour to learn, or should not be instructed. —Butler's *Analogy*, Part II. ch. vi.

The rule of Christ within His Church is seen by the means which He provides for its reinforcement and extension. These are two: Revivals and Missions.—Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. 285.

The glory of Christianity is not that it excludes, but that it comprehends; not that it came of a sudden into the world, or that it is given complete in a particular institution, or can be stated complete in a particular form of words; but that it is the expression of a common spirit which is gathering together all things in one. We cannot say of it, Lo, here it is, or lo, there: it is now, but was not then. We go backward, but we cannot reach its source; we look forward, but we cannot foresee its final power.—T. H. Green, *The Witness of God, Two Lay Sermons*, p. 25.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Providence and the spread of the Christian religion	213
The Atonement a world-comprising fact	213
Missionary zeal of the Primitive Church	214
Early missionary work in Britain and Ireland	215
Missionaries sent from these islands	216
Work of the Eastern Churches	217
Lull and Xavier	217
Erasmus as an advocate of foreign missions	218
Puritan Missions	219
Moravian Missions	219
The Wesley family and Missions	220
The formation of the great Missionary Societies	222
The Bible Society founded	222
A great watershed	223
Early missionary enthusiasts	223
The dearth of missionaries	224
Melville Horne on Missions in 1794	225
George Burder on evangelizing the heathen, 1795	228
Attitude of the East India Company	230
The tasks set before the Church	233
Miss Bird on Japan	233
India as a mission field	235
Work in Asia and Africa	236
Missions a Providential School for heroism	237
The zeal of York for Missions	239
The Empire of Christ	240
The contribution of each race to the plan of Providence	241
The work of the Anglo-Saxon race	242

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X

'ALL the arrangements of Providence, as they respect nations under "the dispensation of the fullness of times," are subsidiary to the world-wide proclamation of Christianity.'[1] That statement brings out with increasing emphasis the Church's call to missionary service. The spread of Christ's kingdom is the clear and urgent duty of every disciple. Buddha is said to have nerved himself for his mission by the thought, 'My law is a law of life for all.' Gentleness and good-will were his contribution to the uplifting of the East, and we may be thankful that such ages had such a message and such a prophet.

Christianity has nobler aims and richer stores of grace and truth. The Atonement is a world-comprising fact. This is well put by a profound thinker.

All the phenomena of human nature are to be regarded in the closest connexion with it, and as exhibiting an exposition of its influence upon the race. The aspect of the Atonement to our race is practically indicated by the course of Providence, from the beginning until now. . . . All theories of Providence founded on abstract reasonings are

[1] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 72.

illusory; they are altogether inapplicable to an administration founded on this principle, and consequently *to the facts of Providence* as they stand within it. On the theory of human existence which takes it in connexion with the Atonement, the race is entirely bound up with mediational purposes, and as a means only to the attainment of answerable results.[1]

St. Paul still stands out as the greatest of all missionaries. His plans expand, his methods are perfected in actual contact with the needs of the world. Divine Providence leads him to his great field in Europe, and he learns to concentrate his whole strength on the cities where the victory was hardest to win, but from which whole provinces were leavened by the new religion.

The first age of Christianity was a time of far-reaching missionary activity. About the middle of the second century Justin Martyr says—

> There is not one nation of men, whether Barbarians, or Greeks, or by whatsoever other name distinguished, whether of those who live in wagons, or of those who have no houses, or those pastoral people who dwell in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of all things through the name of the crucified Jesus.[2]

When Christianity became a *religio licita* under Constantine missionary enthusiasm ebbed. There was a readiness to compromise with error, and attention

[1] George Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. pp. 64–5.
[2] *Dial. cum Trypho*, 117 fin.

was fixed on winning nations rather than on saving individuals. Arianism leavened Gothic Christianity.

Some of the brightest scenes of early missionary activity were in these islands. Providence was guiding the work at every step. Britain seems to have received its first gospel light from Gaul.

> Its coming may well have been a result of the persecution which, in 177, fell upon the Christians of Lyons and Vienne and the country round about them, for there are many traces of a close connexion between the Churches of Gaul and Britain, and some indications of a special connexion between Britain and the Churches of Lyons and Vienne.[1]

We can trace the attendance of British bishops at the Council of Arles in 314, and of Rimini in 359 A.D.[2] Britons went on pilgrimage to Rome and Palestine, and had special links to St. Martin of Tours, of whom St. Patrick is said to have been a disciple.

In Ireland Patrick established schools, trained evangelists, employed women, built churches, till the country became 'the island of Saints.' St. Finnian's school at Clonard had three thousand students, and sent out the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland,' of whom St. Columba was the most famous. In 563 he undertook his mission among the Scots of British Dalriada, where he founded the monastery of Iona, off the coast

[1] Hunt, *History of English Church*, 597–1066 A.D., p. 1.
[2] Ibid., p. 2.

of Mull. This was not only a training-place for evangelists, but a centre for missionary operations among the heathen Picts.

The ancient British Church was almost crushed by the Saxon invaders, though it held its ground in Wales and Cornwall, in Scotland and Ireland. The mission of Augustine brought gospel light into 'what had become a heathen country.' When the work spread through England missionaries were sent to the Teutonic tribes.

In those early missionary activities we have an anticipation and a prophecy of the labours of our own times.

The greatest glory of the English Church was the noble band of men and women, missionaries and teachers, saints and martyrs, who passed across the sea to the Continent in its darkest hour, carrying with them the light of learning and the hope of the gospel. The English were already strong enough to give of their best that missions and schools might be planted among the Germans, Franks, and Saxons. By missions, as well as by pilgrimages, an outlet was afforded for their roving and adventurous spirits, no longer bent on foray, but on the preaching of the gospel of enlightenment and peace; and the stream of enthusiasts was ever increasing.[1]

Industrial and agricultural settlements sprang up round the mission stations; Scripture study and teaching were promoted by the monasteries. Boniface, a native of Crediton, became the Apostle of Germany. He cut down the Sacred Oak of Thor at Geismar in the presence

[1] Dale, *National Life*, p. 85.

of a crowd of heathen, and gradually reformed the Church in Thuringia, 'where the people, though nominally Christian, had fallen into evil practices.' Men and women came over from England to help him in his mission.

The British and Irish missionaries certainly surpassed Boniface in freedom of spirit and purity of Christian knowledge; but Rome, by its superior organization, triumphed in the end, and though it introduced new and unscriptural elements into the Church, it helped at the same time to consolidate its outward framework against the assaults of Paganism.[1]

Ignorance and superstition gradually crept in, till at the beginning of the eleventh century Christendom reached its lowest point in spirituality and morality.

The Eastern Churches were at work in Asia, and the Nestorians were winning converts in China and Tartary. They had flourishing missions in Turkestan, Kashgar, and other parts of Central Asia, but these were largely destroyed by the Turks and Tartars in the fourteenth century. Christianity was almost rooted out of Asia.

Raymund Lull, born in Majorca in 1236, stands out as a true missionary in the Middle Ages. He has been described as 'a fanatic, both spiritually and intellectually,'[2] but his zeal for the conversion of the Mohammedans and his effort to enlist the help of the

[1] Neander, *Church History*.
[2] Von Schubert, *Outlines of Church History*, p. 210.

priests and princes of Europe for that missionary work in which he at last won the crown of martyrdom, is a thrilling story of Christian heroism.

Xavier's devotion and enterprise in the work of Christian missions have been recognized by all Churches, but he was content with superficial results. Bishop Cotton describes his methods as 'utterly wrong, and the results in India and Ceylon most deplorable.' The Jesuit missions are a pitiful story of 'unholy accommodation of Christian truth and observances to heathenish superstitions and customs'; of frightful tortures inflicted on heathen and heretics, and of political intrigue.

The Reformation age had no zeal for missions. The fight with Popery absorbed the energies of Luther and his helpers. But one eloquent advocate called the Church to think of the ground 'where the seed of the gospel has never yet been sown, or where there is a greater crop of tares than of wheat!'

Europe is the smallest quarter of the globe. What, I ask, do we now possess in Asia, which is the largest continent? In Africa what have we? There are surely in these vast tracts barbarous and simple tribes who could easily be attracted to Christ if we sent men among them to sow the good seed. . . . Bestir yourselves, then, ye heroic and illustrious leaders of the army of Christ. . . . Address yourselves with fearless minds to such a glorious work. . . . It is a hard work I call you to, but it is the noblest and highest of all. Would that God had accounted me worthy to die in so holy a work![1]

[1] Erasmus, *Ecclesiasticae*, chap. x.

Erasmus died the year after his enlightened book on the art of preaching was given to the world, and the seed which he scattered fell on stony ground.

The Puritans of Massachusetts had on their seal in 1628 an Indian with a scroll between his lips: 'Come over and help us.' In 1644 a petition was presented to the Long Parliament praying that some steps might be taken to spread the gospel in America and the West Indies. This led to the formation of the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England.' Cromwell heartily supported the effort, and a collection made throughout England yielded £12,000. This Society, when reconstituted after the Restoration, had John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, as its first missionary. His was 'the first mission to the heathen in the Evangelical Church conducted in an evangelical spirit and blessed with lasting results.'[1]

Count Zinzendorf, as a boy of fifteen, had been interested in the Danish mission at Tranquebar. He formed his 'Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed,' and entered into a covenant with a friend to establish missions. That design was carried out in 1732, when the first Moravian missionary sailed for St. Thomas in the West Indies. No Church has such a record of missionary devotion and sacrifice. One Moravian in every sixty is a missionary; their churches on the mission-field are three times as large as those at home. Herrnhut itself has sent out more than 2,000 missionaries,

[1] Warneck.

who have shown a genius for reaching the lowest races, and have set an example to Christendom in their zeal on behalf of the degraded and helpless. The Providence that guides the missionary service of the Church finds striking illustration in the story of the Moravian Church. Zinzendorf's devotion leavened the whole community, and has contributed largely to the spread of the gospel in heathen lands.

In 1701, two years before Wesley was born, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was founded through the zeal of Dr. Thomas Bray. Its operations were chiefly confined to our colonies and dependencies, but good work was done among the Indians and negroes. David Brainerd, who was employed by a Scotch association, laboured among the Delaware tribe from 1743–9 with great success, and his biography by Jonathan Edwards did much to kindle the flame of missionary devotion after his death.

Frederick IV of Denmark sent Ziegenbalg and Plutscho to India at his own expense, and their work spread from the Danish settlement of Tranquebar over the whole Tamil country. Their story greatly stirred Susanna Wesley. Her daughter Emily found the narrative in her father's study. Mrs. Wesley says—

> I was never, I think, more affected with anything than with the relation of their travels, and was exceedingly pleased with the noble design they were engaged in. Their labours refreshed my soul beyond measure, and I could not forbear spending good part of that evening in praising

and adoring the divine goodness for inspiring those good men with such an ardent zeal for His glory, that they were willing to hazard their lives and all that is esteemed dear to men in this world, to advance the honour of their Master, Jesus.

For several days she could think or speak of little else. It led her to ask what more she could do herself. Her zeal in her famous Rectory Services was greatly quickened, and she set apart some time each evening to talk to 'each child by itself, on something that relates to its principal concerns.'

John Wesley went to Georgia with the hope that his way might be opened to labour among the Indians, but Providence had other service for him as the Apostle of England. His energies were soon absorbed in that task. Dr. Coke cast in his lot with Wesley in 1777, and before long was revolving plans for missions to the heathen. In 1786 a series of gales drove the vessel in which he had embarked for Nova Scotia to Antigua, where he found that Methodism had already gained a firm hold on the negroes. Providence thus opened before Coke his path of service, and he was not slow to follow it. The S.P.G. had then one negro clergyman at work in West Africa, and the S.P.C.K. had gained great hold of the Tamils of South India, by its German Lutheran agents, whom it subsidized and in great part directed. 'That was all.'

The new spiritual life which the Evangelical Revival brought to this country was a providential preparation

for missionary service. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Church of England was cold and listless. 'Nonconformity was living a life of decorous dullness, producing little or no effect upon the religious experience of the age.' Before the century closed a great awakening had taken place.

The enormous and energetic Methodist Societies had sprung into vigorous life, every other section of the Nonconformist Church had been stimulated into energetic action, the Church of England had been shaken out of its spiritual torpor, and upon the hearts of all evangelical Christians had been laid the burden of the world's sin and sorrow and needs in a way quite new in English history.[1]

A few dates speak volumes. Methodist missions began in 1786. The Baptist Missionary Society was founded in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795, the Church Missionary Society in 1799, the Religious Tract Society in 1799. The example thus set led largely to the formation of the Evangelical Missionary Society at Basle in 1815.

Whilst the Missionary Societies were struggling into existence their greatest ally was born in London in 1804. Its first President, Lord Teignmouth, called the Bible Society 'a new constellation,' which,

under the favour of Providence, had risen to illuminate the darkness of the moral world. . . . Mysterious and often incomprehensible as the ways of Providence are to our understandings, the hand of God is so plainly revealed in

[1] Lovett, *History of the London Missionary Society*, i. 3.

blessing the proceedings of the Society, that it is scarcely invisible to blindness itself—to Him be the praise and the glory.[1]

No such cluster of mighty missionary agencies has ever arisen in so short a period. Those closing years of the eighteenth century formed a watershed from which the river of life began to flow forth to the heathen world. It has been pronounced to be 'unquestionable that when the spirit of missions broke forth in Protestant England, the religion of England was saved from impending extinction.'[2]

But was it so? Was not the missionary activity the culmination of forces set at work by the Evangelical Revival? That zeal for the salvation of the heathen fanned a flame which was already kindled, and produced a new array of appeals and arguments to rebuke neglect of the gospel in lands that had long walked in its light. Dr. Coke was the prince of missionary enthusiasts. The pure flame of love burned in his breast when it had scarcely warmed the hearts of his countrymen. He is not only the founder of Methodist missions. His influence can be traced in William Carey's classic *Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen*, which was published in 1792, the year before he sailed for India. Coke was also in close communion with the

[1] Morris, *Governors-General of India*, pp. 92-3.
[2] Huntington, *Human Society*, p. 50.

chief men of 'The Clapham Sect,' who helped him with advice and money.

Coke himself sailed for Ceylon with a party of six missionaries and two missionaries' wives on December 30, 1813, and died the following May in the Indian Ocean. That great bereavement set the providential crown on his apostleship. He left the Ceylon Mission as a legacy to Methodism, which was thus baptized for the dead.

We clearly trace the hand of Divine Providence in these events. The hour had come when a sustained attempt must be made by all Christian men to win the world for Christ. Yet even at the end of the eighteenth century English Churches were slow to discern the purpose of Providence. One noble enthusiast was set on fire. David Brainerd's *Life* stirred in Henry Martyn the desire to become a missionary to India. When that door was barred, he went out, in 1805, as a chaplain of the East India Company. There was great dearth of labourers. The Church Missionary Society's Report for 1802 says that they had made 'earnest applications to a very numerous body of clergymen in almost every part of the kingdom'; and hoped that 'several persons in whose piety, zeal, and prudence the Committee might confide would ere this have offered themselves to labour among the heathen. Their hope, however, has been disappointed.' They mourned 'the evident want of that high zeal which animated the apostles and primitive Christians.' In despair they turned to the Continent. Two men were secured from the Berlin

seminary, and sailed for Sierra Leone in the beginning of 1804. It was not till 1813 that the Society's first English missionaries were ordained.

A contemporary picture of this epoch in our missionary history is given by the Rev. Melville Horne, who had been chaplain of Sierra Leone.

I shall be told that the Church of England has long established a Society for Foreign Missions; that the Unitas Fratrum have done worthily in the cause; that the Wesleyan Methodists have had, of late years, great success in the West India islands; that the Particular Baptists have taken up the matter with spirit; that Eliot, Brainard, and others have acquired immortality by their labours among the North American Indians; that the Danes and Hollanders have their Missions in the East; and that the Jesuits, and other religious Orders of the Roman Communion, have shed much blood for Christ, in South America, China, and Japan.[1]

Mr. Horne is not slow to recognize the zeal of one devoted communion. 'The Moravian Brethren,' he says, 'have been among us, what the Jesuits were in the Roman Church. They have laboured, and suffered, and effected more than all of us.'[2] Nor does he fail to pay tribute to workers nearer akin to his own communion.

The Methodists have lately entered upon this career, and bid fair to run it with the same success. . . . The zeal of the Moravian is calm, steady, persevering. . . . The zeal of the

[1] *Letters on Missions, addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches* (1794), p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 34.

Methodist blazes, and burns everything before it. He is open, active, bold, and ardent. He sees himself in a pushing world, and pushes with the foremost. He lives in action; and is dejected and uncomfortable if he wants active employment. The Methodists are known chiefly for what they have done at home; the Moravians for what they have done abroad.[1]

The critic is alive both to the strength and what he deems the weakness of our fathers.

Itinerancy is the palladium of Methodism. Fixing on some favourable post, they revolve in a circle round it, perpetually making excursions in the neighbouring country, and multiplying their circuits and their preachers in proportion to their success. If they do not split of themselves, there is hardly anything in the missionary line which they may not attempt and succeed in. But they will not, I fear, be able to steer clear of persecution, as the Moravians have done; nor do I conceive that they have patience and perseverance for a Greenland mission. A Methodist preacher would think his life thrown away in spending twenty or thirty years upon a few converts. And, I flatter myself, the Methodists are too well acquainted with themselves, to engage in such undertakings, while so many large and populous kingdoms are accessible to their labours.[2]

That criticism sounds strange in our ears to-day. But Mr. Horne scarcely realized the variety of gifts needed for the world's evangelization, or the way in which Divine Providence enlists all manner of workers

[1] *Letters on Missions, addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches* (1794), p. 36

[2] Ibid., p. 37.

in the great service. He is sorely troubled by the lack of zeal in the churches. Heathenism, he says, is not

to be subdued by a few fair-weather soldiers, accompanied by delicate women and children, educated in fashionable accomplishments, and accustomed to all the delicacies of life; who are absolutely incapable of exposing themselves to sun, or wind, or rain, or of exercising those charities which were once the ornament and praise of Christian matrons. I fear, I fear greatly, that I write to the winds, and that neither Christian Ministers, nor their wives, have piety enough for this engagement,[1] &c.

Yet, he adds—

it seems as if the providence of God had kept alive some sense of duty, and some examples of zeal, both among laity and clergy, to be a testimony against us, and to hold us up to infamy to future generations. . . . The Sierra Leone chaplainship went a-begging pretty far before it fell into the hands of my colleague and myself; and now that we have declined it, it lies neglected, as no man thinks it worth his while to pick it up. . . . That our brethren of the various denominations of English Dissenters have any cause to rejoice over us in this respect is more than I know. Except the Reverend Mr. Carey and a friend who accompanies him, I am not informed of any of their ministers who are engaged in Missions. . . . The Reverend Dr. Coke has of late years done something in this way in our West India Islands, and might have done much more, had the Methodist Preachers, as a body, given him that unequivocal support to which his zeal in such a cause should entitle him. Hitherto those Missions may be considered

[1] *Letters on Missions, addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches* (1794), p. 134.

as *his* Missions, rather than those of the Methodists. I am, however, happy to be informed that his brethren begin to enter more heartily into the spirit of Missions, and I flatter myself they will now embark in them with all their soul, and all their strength.[1]

Mr. Horne had earned a right to speak on the subject. He had gone to Sierra Leone with the hope of doing something towards the establishment of a mission to the natives. After a residence of fourteen months he returned to England from a conviction that he could not effect his purpose. Nor was he willing to expose his delicate wife and young children to the unhealthy climate. He adds a forecast which the history of West African Missions has abundantly justified.

I am fully of opinion that Missions would succeed in those parts, if they were taken up with proper spirit, and conducted in a proper manner. The natives are friendly and tractable, and appear desirous of information in religion as well as in letters.

Another book appeared the year after Mr. Horne's appeal. When the London Missionary Society was formed in 1795, the Rev. George Burder of Coventry issued *An Address to the serious and zealous Professors of the Gospel, of every denomination, respecting an attempt to evangelize the heathen.* 'During the last fifty years,' he says, 'there has been a great revival of

[1] *Letters on Missions, addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches* (1794), pp. 135–6.

true religion among ourselves.' Then he refers to the growing zeal for missions.

Among the generous designs of lively Christians, we rejoice to hear that more than a few, unacquainted with each other's wishes, have, in different places, expressed most vehement desires to do something for the poor heathen; and, without any present specific plan of operation in view, have actually begun to lay by a little money, that they may be ready to contribute to so glorious a work as soon as ever Providence may favour them with an opportunity.

Mr. Burder gives a glimpse of the providential means which had led to this result.

Modern discoveries in geography have perhaps contributed to enlarge the desires of Christians in this respect. Captain Cook and others have traversed the globe, almost from pole to pole, and have presented to us, as it were, a new world, a world of islands in the vast Pacific Ocean—some of them as promising in the disposition of the people as in the appearance of the country.

Providence was never more manifestly at work than in this outburst of missionary enterprise. A new era was dawning on the world. Manufactures were transformed by an amazing series of inventions. Steam was reducing distances and bridging lands long separated by a great gulf. The wonders of the telegraph and the modern developments of electricity were in store. Commerce was binding together the nations and making them share each other's prosperity. Yet Christian men were strangely blind to the providential signs of the times.

The East India Company did its utmost to prevent Christian missions. Doors were scrupulously closed against those who might disturb the slumber of Hinduism. The East India Company was eighty years in India before a Christian church was built.[1] Yet not even the mighty Company could long stem the tide. One of its own magnates, Charles Grant, was a chief instrument in opening up India to the gospel. He asked the S.P.C.K. to send out a clergyman to Calcutta, and offered to pay him £360 a year out of his own pocket.[2] Dr. George Smith says—

A friend of Schwartz, the great missionary, he helped Carey to Serampore, he sent out the Evangelical chaplains through Simeon, he founded Haileybury College, he was the chief agent [one of the chief agents is more correct] in the institution of the Church Missionary and Bible Societies, he fought for the freedom of the African slave as wisely as for the enlightenment of the caste-bound Hindu. He was the authority from whom Wilberforce derived at once the impulse and the knowledge which gained the first battle for toleration in the Hon. East India Company's charters of 1793 and 1813. Above all, Charles Grant wrote in 1792 the noblest treatise on the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain and the means of improving their moral condition, which the English language has ever yet seen.[3]

There was many a hard struggle before India was opened to the gospel. Grant's scheme for a mission in

[1] *History of Church Missionary Society*, i. 52.
[2] Ibid., i. 53.
[3] Ibid., i. 55.

Bengal was submitted in 1786 to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, who 'both effectually poured cold water on it.' In 1793 Wilberforce, moved by Grant, asked Parliament, in renewing the East India Company's Charter, to add clauses granting facilities for missions in India. But the directors took fright. The Court of Governors in May, 1793, expressed their opinion 'that the conversion of 50,000 or 100,000 natives of any degree of character would be the most serious disaster that could happen, and they thanked God that it was impracticable.'

They subsidized heathenism lavishly, took the great temple of Kalighat under their special care, provided guards of honour, and fired salutes when idols were carried in procession.

But they did their best to keep Christian missionaries out of the country. This attitude was only changed slowly and by compulsion, and was only finally abandoned by the force of public opinion after the Charter was renewed in 1833.[1]

Wilberforce wrote in 1793:

All my clauses were struck out last night, and our territories in Hindostan, twenty millions of people included, are left in the undisturbed and peaceable possession, and committed to the providential protection of—'Brama.'

The same year Lord Macartney, in his embassy to China, stated, 'The English never attempt to disturb

[1] *British Foreign Missions*, p. 21.

or dispute the worship or tenets of others; they come to China with no such views; they have no priests or chaplains with them, as have other European nations.'

Carey had to place his mission under the protection of the Danish flag in consequence of the hostility of the East India Company; and Dr. Forsyth, of the London Missionary Society, had to live in the Dutch settlement at Chinsurah, about twenty miles from Calcutta, though he afterwards extended his work to that city.[1] Sydney Smith was a stout opponent of missions to India. He thought that in civilization and morals the natives compared favourably with Europeans. He doubted whether their conversion would ever be more than nominal. Nor had he any reliance on the discretion of the missionary societies.

The story of this blindness is painful reading for us who see that India had come under the power of England in order that it might be opened to the influence of the gospel; but God's providence guided the Church to a new conception of its duty, and the condition of things to-day astonishes us. The world has become accessible to Christian influence and teaching in a way that our fathers would have regarded as a sheer impossibility. David Livingstone opened the heart of Africa to the gospel. After long hesitation and opposition, China, Japan, and Korea have thrown wide their doors to Western influence.

[1] *British Foreign Missions*, p. 14.

The ceaseless enterprise of the missionary spirits of the Church, which has continually anticipated trade and outrun the flag and found admittance through open door after door which had previously been closed, has made the past sixty years a period of remarkable development and of ever-growing fruitfulness in British missions to the heathen.[1]

The tasks before the Church of Christ on the mission-field to-day call for its ripest wisdom and its loftiest devotion. Providence is continually opening new doors for the evangelization of the world. Opportunities greater than any over which the heroes of the past rejoiced are ours. Japan has come on to the horizon of the West almost within a lifetime. Miss Bird's impressions of that country are of singular interest. She found that Dr. Hepburn, one of the oldest foreign residents in Yokohama, was by no means enthusiastic about the Japanese, or sanguine regarding their future in any respect, and evidently thought them deficient in solidity.[2] Miss Bird herself says 'the Japanese standard of foundational morality is very low, and life is neither truthful nor pure.'[3]

A clever Japanese writer urges that the charges of fickleness and frivolity against his nation are 'easily explained as but the attendant phenomena of the transitory age from which we are just emerging.'[4] 'Upon Europe and America the full power of our

[1] *British Foreign Missions*, p. 25.
[2] *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, i. 44.
[3] Ibid., p. 187.
[4] *The Japanese Spirit*, p. 131.

mental searchlight is now playing, in quest of those new ideas for future development from which we have been accustomed to draw mainly on China and India.'[1] 'For the average mind of the educated Japanese something like modern scientific agnosticism, with a strong tendency towards the materialistic monism of recent times, is just what pleases and satisfies it most.'[2]

Here is a wonderful nation opened to the civilization of the Western world. She is not merely a learner, she is also a teacher. Her prowess in war has amazed the world, but 'it is impossible that the new-born energy of Japan should never have anything better to teach us than the mere craft of war.'[3] Our allies of the East have earned a right to be treated as equals. One who has worked amongst them says—

> The time is past in which men could be sent to teach Japanese people what the West thought good for them, and now they in their turn employ and resort to teachers just so far as they find they can gain from them what they really value and need.[4]

We are facing questions of unspeakable importance.

Hitherto, in spite of its Eastern origin, the triumphs of the Christian religion have been limited to the West. Is it not possible that the falling off of mediaeval dogma, in which so many fearful Christians at home see so much danger to the faith, may be simply the prelude to a new

[1] *The Japanese Spirit*, pp. 44–5.
[2] Ibid., p. 94.
[3] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 237.
[4] The Bishop of South Tokyo, *Guardian*, July 24, 1907.

revival, which will sweep away the Occidental boundaries that have hitherto confined the creed which Christ taught ? [1]

This is frankly admitted by our wisest missionaries.

India will yet have a great influence on Christianity. The people of that land, released from the throttling grip of Vedântism, will elucidate and emphasize some aspects of Christ's teaching which have not yet made their due appeal to the people of the West ; so that we, without them, cannot be made perfect.[2]

The difficulties of missionary work in India are powerfully set forth by Mr. Meredith Townsend.

Christianity in a new people must develop civilization for itself, not be smothered by it, still less be exhausted in the impossible effort to accrete to itself a civilization from the outside. Natives of India, when they are Christians, will be and ought to be Asiatic still—that is, as unlike English rectors or English Dissenting ministers as it is possible for men of the same creed to be ; and the effort to squeeze them into those moulds not only wastes power, but destroys the vitality of the original material.[3]

In India and China Christian missions are faced by a civilization that is older than their own. 'When our forefathers were pure barbarians, his (the Hindu's) were in the highest stage of civilization.' [4] The lifting up of the lower races is attended with other problems not less difficult. We may be in danger of imposing

[1] *Spectator*, January 27, 1906.
[2] Haigh's *Some Leading Ideas of Hinduism*, p. 7.
[3] *Asia and Europe*, p. 81. See pp. 67–81.
[4] *The Empire of Christ*, p. 12.

our own views upon them in matters that are non-essential and seeking to bring them under a yoke of Western customs which they are not able to bear. Providence here teaches us to act with sympathy and with caution. There has sometimes been a danger lest Christianity should be 'mainly a code of moral prohibitions.' Mr. Alston, in his thoughtful essay on *The White Man's Work in Asia and Africa*, shows that to encourage the growth of that fuller and more abundant life which Christianity came to bring, we need 'visible, tangible institutions to which the nascent civilization may attach itself as it develops.'[1] Here is the argument for educational work and industrial training. Missionary work is bound to supply 'a suitable environment, intellectual and moral, for the growing mind. Without this, even the picked spirits can progress but feebly, and in a maimed, uncertain fashion.'[2]

Spiritual forces, however high, require the aid of material instruments. And these instruments, in the shape of press and pulpit, schools and laws, police and roads, to strengthen and encourage developing aspirations and to retard any temporary retrogression, it is the happy privilege of the strong peoples to bestow for the benefit of the weak.[3]

Missionaries, as the agents of a new civilization as well as a new religion, need to be the best trained and most catholic-spirited workers of the Church. It is

[1] Alston's *White Man's Work*, p. 67.
[2] Ibid., p. 69.
[3] Ibid., p. 70.

comparatively easy to destroy the institutions of heathenism and to sap its faith in its gods. But there is a danger lest a nation should thus lose its moorings and be plunged into atheism. 'Evolution rather than revolution should be the watchword of Christianity, as indeed it already is among the more broad-minded of Christian missionaries.'[1]

Some of the tasks assigned the Church of Christ have been nobly finished, but Foreign Missions stand out as the new providential school for heroism. The sphere in which the Elizabethan sailors and discoverers won lasting glory for England was narrow compared with this moral and spiritual conquest of the world. Opportunities for chivalry, for self-sacrifice, openings for adventure and enterprise, are here of which they never dreamed. We have ourselves much to learn. 'In the school of Protestant Christianity [it has been said] none of us has acquired the breadth of view necessary for the just estimation of alien ideals of life.'[2]

We are wrestling with problems on which more hinges than we yet understand. What form is the Christianity of these races to assume? How far must Western notions and customs be accepted by our converts? Shall we seek to impart 'the distinctively Teutonic or the distinctively Christian elements to the less developed nations'?[3]

[1] Alston's *White Man's Work*, p. 73.
[2] Ibid., p. 36.
[3] Ibid., p. 26.

Missions are educative for the Church at home. We are learning to respect the gifts of other races, to understand that they have their providential sphere as well as ourselves. There are regions where the white man finds himself less fitted for service than the coloured race. That is their sphere; our task is to help them to make the highest use of their providential position. They have much to teach us, and we must welcome every good thing they can give us, every hint for better service. We are scholars in the same school of Divine Providence, and must cherish 'a reasonable belief in the *potential* equality of all mankind as sharing alike in a capacity for unlimited development.'[1]

A clear grasp of that fact will save us from any lack of sympathy or tact. There will be no assumption of superiority, no overbearing temper. We shall recommend the gospel by our readiness to recognize the good that is in others, and our eagerness to share our best gifts of civilization and religion with the world. Everything is ready for the supreme conquest. The Bible speaks to all the great races in their own tongue; modes of communication have been revolutionized, the brotherhood of man is acknowledged. A thousand indications point to the possibility of leavening the life of all nations with gospel truth. The Church at home has a glorious field for enterprise, for generosity, for self-sacrifice. She will have to give her best to the world if it is to be won for Christ. Her sons and

[1] Alston, *White Man's Work*, p. 79.

daughters, the most gifted and richly endowed of these, are wanted; and no field of labour which they can enter has such rich rewards to offer, such delights and inspirations, as those which spring from enlisting the best gifts of other nations for truth and purity and Christ.

York has its own page in the providential history of missions. David Hill embodied in himself the missionary devotion and enthusiasm for which the city has long been famous. Two of his uncles were engaged in missionary work. Richard Burdsall Lyth is reckoned among the heroes of Fiji, and his wife, as devoted as her husband, pleaded with the redoubtable Thakombau to spare some women from the cannibal ovens. As a youth David Hill's father gave £70, earned by over-time, to foreign missions. His boys became enthusiastic collectors for that cause. Kneeling at the communion rail in Centenary Chapel a month after his mother's death, the future missionary found peace with God. In the same chapel he was ordained for his life-work on October 25, 1864, with William Scarborough. In China he proved himself a true apostle. St. Francis of Assisi was not more richly baptized into the spirit of love and of self-sacrifice than this missionary son of York. His visits to England were as influential in promoting his life-work as his toil abroad. When he came back in 1881 he sought to enlist the most devoted young Methodists in this service, and 'almost all the recruits to Central China for the next ten years were

due directly or indirectly to his personal advocacy during this visit.'[1] Dr. Sydney Hodge, one of the noblest of medical missionaries, went out to China in response to his appeal.[2]

In our age Christian men have gained

an altered conception of God's providential dealing with the world. We have come to recognize that salvation is a much greater and more far-reaching purpose on the part of God than our fathers conceived it to be, and that throughout the whole family of man there has been a vast preparation for this great purpose of the ages.[3]

Each race may be an instrument of Providence for enriching the religious thought and life of the world. Christianity is as yet an exotic in India, and until it has become naturalized, its real work has not begun. There is a rich recompense in store for us here.

The Hindu religious nature is a veritable Nile, which waits only for the skill which can direct and the energy which can utilize, to transform India into the richest province of the Empire of Christ.[4]

Seven bishops have recently set themselves to describe the contribution which the various peoples of China, Japan, India, Islam, the Pacific, and the Negro race may be expected to make to the perfect Church of the future. Bishop Montgomery, who edits the volume, speaks of

[1] Dr. Barber, *David Hill*, p. 68.
[2] Ibid., p. 92.
[3] Lucas, *The Empire of Christ*, p. 6.
[4] Ibid., p. 148.

the company as the seven dreamers who have glorious visions of the coming days of grace and blessing. 'Each race is called to bring its own contribution and occupy the place reserved from the beginning for it which no one else can fill.'[1]

The Church is learning that Divine Providence needs leaders to open the way and wise organization to save the infant Church on the mission-field from being tainted with the old evils, and to train them into a mighty army for God. Great pioneers stamp their own personality on a mission; but system is needed to conserve the results and make them a foundation for wider influence.[2]

Professor von Schubert closes his *Outlines of Church History* with a noble passage in which he views all Christian communities as 'proof of the power and wealth of the common source, the historical figure of Christ.' The Church is on its way to victory over Mohammed and Buddha as it overcame Zeus and Woden. Japan must decide which path it will take.

The result of a 'Missionary century' will soon be twelve million Christians in pagan lands, a much greater proportion of whom have been won in the last quarter than in the first three put together. To-day there is no longer any Church or any party which refuses to undertake this, the greatest of all tasks, *the mission to the world*. . . . The faith is sure of victory in the future, for we see the lines of Church History converging in a time when

[1] *Mankind and the Church*, p. xii.

[2] See Bishop Mylne, *Missions to Hindus*, pp. 78–83.

all peoples 'hear His voice,' and the religion of humanity has measured the compass of the earth.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon race has in this respect obeyed the call of Divine Providence as no other race has done. The missionary contributions for Christendom in 1907 from Protestant bodies were £4,679,100, of which British and American societies raised £3,920,764; Germany gave £351,098. The British and American societies supported 14,083 missionaries and missionaries' wives, Germany 2,095. Their adherents were 2,684,565; those of German societies 240,883. These figures show how Providence has laid the missionary cause on the conscience and heart of the Anglo-Saxon race, and given it the chief share in the regeneration of the world. We have seen how great are the difficulties of the task, how complicated its problems, what strain it involves on the courage, the sacrifice, the resources of the Human Providence as represented by the missionary churches. But we have also seen that this is a field where every grace of Christian character may be developed, where new revelations of the will of God concerning man may be gained, and where our own religion may be given back to us enriched by contributions made to it by the friends and disciples of our Master among 'all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.'

[1] *Outlines of Church History*, pp. 346–7.

XI

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS A BOOK OF PROVIDENCE

O Thou Good Omnipotent, who so carest for every one of us as if Thou caredst for him only, and so for all as if they were but one.—Augustine, *Confessions*, Book iii. chap. xi.

Providence their guide.—*Paradise Lost*, xii. 647.

They that watch Providences shall never want a Providence to watch.—Matthew Henry.

It taught me to know that Providence was a reality, and prayer the highest sacrament.—*Charles Kingsley*, i. 66 (with reference to the year before his marriage).

I have always been a child of Providence.—*Letters of James Macdonald*, p. 25. Cf. Thomas Boston, *Account of my Life*, Period iii.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Each life a page in the Book of Providence	245
Sir Thomas Browne's miracle of thirty years	245
A befitting reserve	246
Providence in a single life	247
Jacob's testimony to Providence	247
Newman's teaching on Providence	248
Pessimism takes an unworthy view of life	250
Wesley's recognition of Providence	251
Providence in other lives	252
John Harvard in America	253
Margaret Ogilvy and her faith in Providence	253
Comfort of faith in Providence	254
Flavel on Providence	256
A personal study of the ways of Providence	256

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Newman, *Sermons bearing on Subjects of the Day*, *Parochial Sermons*; Bruce, *The Providential Order*; Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*; Isaac Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm*; Flavel, *Divine Conduct; or, the Mystery of Providence.*

XI

EACH human life has its page in the Book of Divine Providence. That is the crowning glory of this truth as set forth in the New Testament. Our interest becomes intense as we turn to our own page. It is more personal than the record of the Providence that rules the world, that guides the nations, that inspires the Church. It is my page. As we look along its lines we live over again days made memorable by divine interpositions in sickness, in danger, in temptation. We read the story with memories of God's goodness which are always new. So did Sir Thomas Browne pay his tribute—

'Now for my life it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and to common ears would sound like a miracle.'

Who that has ever been young, that has lived light in the spring, can fail to understand what Sir Thomas Browne meant by his miracle of thirty years? It was to those who cannot that Christ refused a sign. If the world, with all its myriad wonders, will not touch them, if through the veils of all its so transparent forms they cannot see the face of God flashing—neither will they behold though one rose from the dead.[1]

[1] Le Gallienne, *Religion of a Literary Man*, p. 12.

This subject is sacred. Often only God and His human friend know all its wonders. Sometimes the leaf is opened that those who are dearest to us may read it. A certain reserve here is becoming to the man who feels his debt to some gracious interposition of Providence.

The more fully he realizes that God is thus mercifully dealing with him, the less he will like to speak about it; and this is one reason why the pretenders whom one meets in the world have not the real insight into the course of Providence which they think they have, viz. because they talk of it so freely. Were the privileges of which they boast what they think they are, they would not speak of them. Religious men, on the contrary, are very reserved, if only that they dare not betray, if we may so speak, God's confidence. This circumstance, however, makes it the more difficult to speak on the subject without unreality; still, I suppose it is true that religious men have their prayers answered in a wonderful way, and with sufficient distinctness to be, in addition to other evidences, a ground of confidence to them that God is with them.[1]

Newman's view must be received with a certain reserve. We can make no better contribution to the upbuilding of other characters than a fitting and timely tribute to what we have known of these riches of help and blessing. If there were no other proof of the overruling providence of God, the personal experience of believers would give them strong confidence in His never-failing care. The very limitation of the range

[1] Newman, *Sermons bearing on Subjects of the Day*, pp. 399–400.

of such experience is of advantage. We are brought into close quarters with the subject. History deals with nations and centuries; here we have the record of a life with its lessons written on its face.[1]

Memory finds in these incidents constant food for faith and hope. Newman says—

> Jacob's distinguishing grace, then, as I think it may be called, was a habit of affectionate musing upon God's providences towards him in time past, and of overflowing thankfulness for them. . . . Such was Jacob, living in memory rather than in hope, counting times, recording seasons, keeping days; having his history by heart, and his past life in his hand. And as if to carry on his mind with that of his descendants, it was enjoined upon them, that once a year every Israelite should appear before God with a basket of fruit of the earth, and call to mind what God had done for him and his father Jacob, and express his thankfulness for it.[2]

Before its work is finished we sometimes misinterpret the Providence that is over our lives. Jacob misjudged God when he complained, 'All these things are against me' (Gen. xlii. 36), but he lived to revise his verdict and to commend Joseph's son to that providential care which had so greatly enriched and protected him (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16). The Jewish patriarch would have endorsed those words of Flavel—'Tis the fear of God within us and the providence of God round about us which make the firm and solid basis of all sanctified

[1] See Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 255.
[2] *Parochial Sermons*, v. pp. 75–82.

and desirable prosperity.' On his death-bed the whole course of God's providence was lighted up, and he set his seal to the truth that goodness and mercy had followed him all the days of his life.

Joseph had already opened the book of Providence to comfort his brothers when their sin found them out (Gen. xlv. 5, 7). God had overruled their wrong-doing for the blessing of a multitude. The family aspect of Providence is never lost sight of in these pages of the patriarchal record, and we are not less rich in the care and love of God for our families than were His servants of earlier generations. Mordecai saw that Esther's personal triumph had been a providential preparation for conspicuous service to her race (Esther iv. 13, 14). St. Paul rejoices in the Providence which had made him the instrument for the salvation of Onesimus in Rome (Phil. v. 10).

There is a suggestive chapter entitled 'Presages' in a recent study of Newman. M. Bremond says—

> The guiding voice of God presents itself to us, not as a luminous whole, but broken up into an indefinite series of small and obscure glimmering lights. It is the large prism of 'present duty' which splits up every instant the divine ray, and shows us, instead of the long list of directions for the way which our imagination would demand, just what is necessary for us to see in order to take one step in advance.[1]

Newman's teaching on this subject brings home

[1] Henri Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*, chap. vii. p. 282.

the doctrine of Providence, in presenting it to the religious conscience no longer as a far-off Sanction, but as a rule that is immediate, direct, and precise. It is the 'Discourse on Universal History' adapted to each particular existence. A sovereign hand holds and crosses at His pleasure the threads of all created activities; a wisdom eternal and minutely attentive, foresees, chooses, predetermines, follows close, is imminent in, the slightest details of the events which cross the path of each life. God, an ever-present witness, an actor always on the stage, awaits and watches us without intermission; and the most insignificant of coincidences is big, perhaps, with some divine project.[1]

Newman bids us 'lay up deep in our hearts the recollection, how mysteriously little things are in this world connected with great; how single moments, improved or wasted, are the salvation or ruin of all-important interests.'[2]

His own election as Fellow of Oriel made Newman's path of service clear to him, and he was 'constant all through his life, as his intimate friends know, in his thankful remembrance year after year of this great mercy of Divine Providence.'[3]

Human lives furnish innumerable instances of the way in which God chooses the sphere of service for His servants. John Baxter, the naval shipwright, was sent to Antigua to carry on the work among the negroes which Nathaniel Gilbert had begun, and

[1] Henri Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*, chap. vii. p. 283.
[2] *Parochial Sermons*, ii. p. 114.
[3] *Letters*, i. 73.

Barbara Heck to be His witness in New York, and to stir up Philip Embury to 'employ his talent, which for several years had been hid, as it were, in a napkin.'[1]

The reason for many a change in home and circumstances may be sought in the Providence which wants a workman to do a piece of neglected work.

Pessimism cuts itself off from Providence. It takes an unworthy view of human life. It is blind to the dignity and glory of man ; it has no conception what the Fatherhood of God involves. It will not understand how God can care for a creature so short-lived and so lowly. The temptation is one which all feel at times.

> The lives of common men are too obscure to find a place in the pages of history, and we are tempted to think that they are almost too minute objects for the eye of Providence to rest on.[2]

The root of such a difficulty lies in limitations of the divine power and love, and forgetfulness of the place man holds in the heart of God. Schopenhauer says—

> The life of every individual, if we survey it as a whole and in general, is really always a tragedy. The deeds and vexations of the day, the restless irritation of the moment, the desires and fears of the week, the mishaps of every hour, are all through chance, which is ever bent upon some jest, scenes of a comedy. Thus, as if fate would add derision to the misery of our existence, our fate must

[1] Letter of Thomas Taylor to John Wesley.
[2] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 258.

contain all the woes of tragedy, and yet we cannot even assert the dignity of tragic characters, but in the broad detail of life must inevitably be the foolish characters of a comedy.[1]

Such despair does despite to all Scripture teaching as to the creation of man. It ignores the meaning of the Incarnation, which gives abiding glory to human nature. We have seen how Science supports the Bible in regarding man as king of the great domain of Nature. Such teaching leaves no room for pessimism. In view of his origin and his work, man is worthy of all the care which Divine Providence lavishes upon him, and there is reasonable ground to expect that when the new heaven and new earth are revealed that care of Divine Providence will be abundantly repaid.

There is no detail of life in which a good man does not trace the hand that guides. Wesley saw that there is a Providence over a man's reading. 'The providence of God directing me to à Kempis' writings.' Every step in his life, every feature in his work, was guided and shaped by the same gracious hand. As he reviewed his history he realized more and more that it was a tissue of providences. This was his strength and comfort. God was always with him.

At York, on June 7, 1755, he writes—

One of the Residentiaries sent for Mr. Williamson, who had invited me to preach in his church, and told him, 'Sir, I abhor persecution; but if you let Mr. Wesley

[1] *The World as Will and Idea*, pp. 415-16.

preach, it will be the worse for you.' He desired it nevertheless; but I declined. Perhaps there is a providence in this also. God will not suffer my little remaining strength to be spent on those who will not hear me but in an honourable way.

The *Journal* for March, 1757, says—

Mr. Fletcher helped me again. How wonderful are the ways of God! When my bodily strength failed, and no clergyman in England was able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and a help meet for me in every respect. Where should I have found such another?

Fletcher had been ordained the previous Sunday at Whitehall, and hastened to West Street to help Wesley in the service.

Earl Shaftesbury's Methodist nurse was one of the chief providences of his life. Lowly workers are thus linked with those who stand out from their fellows. They have their abiding reward in the influence of those they have prayed for and trained in the love and fear of God.

Personal experience of the care of Divine Providence gives courage to face the future. The Shepherd Psalm closes with that triumphant note, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever' (Ps. xxiii. 6). It is faith in God's providential rule that alone can banish fear. Cuthbert's saying to his discouraged followers breathes strong trust in the

God of Providence. 'Look at the eagle overhead; God can feed us through him if He will.'

Captain Edward Johnson, to whom we owe a volume with the inspiring title, *Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England*, wrote an account of the way in which the 'pilgrim people'

> began to erect a college, the Lord by His provident hand giving His approbation to the work, in sending over a faithful and godly servant of His, the reverend Mr. John Harvard, who joining with the people of Christ at Charlestown, suddenly after departed this life, and gave near a thousand pounds towards the work; wherefore the Government thought it meet to call it Harvard College in remembrance of him.[1]

It was a strange providence which led the Southwark butcher's son, after seven years' training at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, with his young bride to America, where he died of consumption fourteen months later. He saw the blessing which learning would bring to the rising community, and though he died his work has been expanding ever since.

Mr. Barrie's story of his mother's faith is a lovely tribute to Divine Providence. Her favourite paraphrase, the last she read, was that on Isa. xl. 27–31—'the Omnipotence of Christ the comfort of His people.'

> Art thou afraid His power shall fail
> When comes thy evil day?
> And can an all-creating arm
> Grow weary or decay?

[1] H. C. Shelley's *John Harvard and his Times*, pp. 290–1.

I heard her voice gain strength as she read it, I saw her timid face take courage. . . . She talked of the long and lovely life she had had, and of Him to whom she owed it. She said good-bye to them all, and at last turned her face to the side where her best-beloved had lain, and for an hour she prayed. They only caught the words now and again, and the last they heard were 'God' and 'love.' I think God was smiling when He took her to Him, as He had so often smiled at her during those seventy-six years.[1]

Mr. Barrie was full of apprehension when he had to tell her that her daughter, who had nursed her with unflagging devotion, had died almost on her feet. But the blow was softened, and his sister and his mother, who died three days later, were buried together. As he thought of God's mercy amid the sorrow, he seemed to hear his mother saying, 'O ye of little faith.'

Newman writes with great force and beauty on the subject of 'A Particular Providence as revealed in the Gospel.' He describes it as a thought almost too great for our faith.

How gracious is this revelation of God's particular Providence to those who seek Him! God beholds thee individually . . . and understands thee as He made thee . . . He sympathizes in thy hopes and thy temptations. He interests Himself in all thy anxieties and remembrances. He compasses thee round and bears thee in His arms. . . . He looks tenderly upon thy hands and thy feet; He hears thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Thou dost not love thyself

[1] *Margaret Ogilvy*, pp. 184, 202–3.

better than He loves thee. Thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He puts it on thee it is as thou will put it on thyself, if thou art wise, for a greater good afterward.[1]

Dr. Arnold is of the same mind. He quotes our Lord's words, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in *Me*'; and adds—

By which I understand that it is not so much general notions of Providence which are our best support, but a sense of the personal interest, if I may so speak, taken in our welfare by Him who died for us and rose again.[2]

Even when things seem to go amiss the good man's heart will not fail. The past will supply so many instances of God's grace and care that he will be strong for the days of testing. He will remember St. Paul's great 'law of Providence': 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. viii. 28). It is not only unwise but ungrateful to murmur. There is a fine spirit in that word of Sir James Stephen—

I have passed a life which is now in its wane in the uninterrupted enjoyment of the best temporal gifts of Providence, and it would be criminal and irrational to disturb myself at the prospect of some of the least important of them being withdrawn.[3]

Dean Church dwells impressively upon the comfort which faith in Providence inspires in his sermon on

[1] *Parochial Sermons*, iii. 123–5.
[2] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*, Letter 60.
[3] *Letters of Sir James Stephen*, p. 58.

'The Never-failing Providence of God.' He asks whether there is no present and immediate remedy against our fears, no truth which may lift off the burden from our mind and heart. He finds this, he says,

> in the thought that God guides us; that we are not walking and wandering unwatched, uncared for—helpless among enemies, blindly stumbling along a path in which no one directs our steps; but that all around us, now and to-morrow, and each hour until the end, are the watchful eyes of God, are the mighty hands of God. From the range of those eyes we can never stray; from out of those hands we can never fall. Infinite wisdom is in that foresight that never fails; infinite love and goodness in that power which has no master. Are we able to trust that wisdom? Are we willing to submit ourselves to that will? Then we are within a shelter where we can take no harm. Then, come what may, we are safe.[1]

There is no presumption in looking for providential guidance and succour in our own lives. They belong to God; they are His gift, they are His instruments. We live in a world that is broad-based on Providence, and every daily mercy we enjoy comes from the hand of our heavenly Father. He can surely add those unexpected blessings which His children need. Personal experience of God's providence is what we are encouraged to expect by the exceeding great and precious promises.

Every man's life, then, is 'a plan of God.' Flavel, in his treatise on *Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of*

[1] *Village Sermons*, p. 166.

Providence, has an address, 'To the Ingenuous Readers, those especially who are the heedful observers of the ways of Providence.'

I am greatly mistaken, if the history of our own lives, if it were well drawn up, and distinctly perused, would not be the pleasantest history that ever we read in our lives.

He explains the object of his work, and adds—

But, reader, thou only art able to compile the history of Providence for thyself, because the memorials that furnish it are only in thine own hands.

Christians are advised 'to keep written memorials, or journals, of Providence by them, for their own and others' use and benefit.'

Providence [he urges] carries our lives, liberties, and concernments in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its cupboard, your money in its purse, your safety in its enfolding arms; and sure it is the least part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at its hands.

Flavel was ejected from the living of Dartmouth in 1662. His treatise is dedicated to William, Duke of Bedford. Some idea of its contents may be gained from his scheme. He says, 'First, I shall prove that the concernments of the saints in this world, are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special Providence; Secondly, I will show you in what particular concernments of theirs this Providential care is evidently discovered; Thirdly, that it is the duty of saints to advert, and heedfully observe these

performances of Providence for them in all their concernments; Fourthly, In what manner this Duty is to be performed by them,' &c.

Isaac Taylor sets us wondering over the Providence that shapes our lives in ways far beyond our own will or wisdom. A man's unchosen lot sometimes has,

if we may so speak, been constructed from the floating fragments of other men's fortunes, drifted by the accidents of wind and tide across the billows of life, till they were stranded at the very spot where the individual for whom they were destined was ready to receive them. By such strong and nicely fitted movements of the machine of Providence it is that the tasks of life are distributed where best they may be performed, and its burdens apportioned where best they may be sustained. By accidents of birth or connexion, the bold, the sanguine, the energetic, are led into the front of the field of arduous exertion; while by similar fortuities, quite as often as by choice, the pusillanimous, the fickle, the faint-hearted, are suffered to spend their days under the shelter of ease, and in the recesses of domestic tranquillity.[1]

[1] *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, p. 139.

XII

REMARKABLE PROVIDENCES

And still it hath been the pious and constant practice of the saints in all generations, to preserve the memory of the more famous and remarkable providences that have befallen them in their times, as a precious treasure.—FLAVEL.

> When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
>
> POPE, *Essay on Man.*

Providence and courage never abandon the good soldier.—COIGNET (SLOANE'S *Napoleon Bonaparte*, iii. 248).

> Don't give up before the ship goes down:
> It's a stiff gale, but Providence wun't drown.
>
> LOWELL, *Biglow Papers*, II. ii. 315–6.

The miracles of Providence, if only clear knowledge be not wanting, are not to be viewed as something isolated, but as the most widespread of all. It is doubtless true that what has been long prepared in the world's history by natural causes bursts forth at last, as Klopstock says, in the thunder-track of decisive crisis. But it is mere human short-sightedness when miracles of divine wisdom are only acknowledged at last in a single point.—DORNER, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, ii. 157.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Providence Section in the *Methodist Magazine*	261
A tribute to its interest	263
Strange coincidences in our lives	264
Danger of multiplying these incidents	265
Providence not Occasionalism	266
Remarkable men and remarkable events	267
Cromwell's thoughts on Providence	269
Danger of misinterpreting events	270
Pope's questions on Providence	271
Remarkable providences give emphasis to the doctrine	272
Trust, not presumption	273
Boethius on Divine Providence	274

LITERATURE

Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God;* Newman, *Parochial Sermons;* M'Cosh, *The Method of the Divine Government;* W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology;* Isaac Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*

XII

IN the *Methodist Magazine* for 1804, Joseph Benson started a memorable section: 'The Providence of God Asserted.' In sketching 'the Nature of the Plan intended to be pursued in the future management of this publication,' he 'takes this opportunity of informing the subscribers, that the principal end invariably kept in view, will be to illustrate the Word, Works, Providence, and Grace of God.'

The fourth department will be occupied by materials designed to illustrate the providential government of God, whether over the world in general, or over certain nations, churches, families, or individuals in particular. It is, therefore, designed to include, as far as place can be found for them, sketches of universal or particular history, civil or ecclesiastical, prefaced by a short essay on the importance of historic information, and also such entertaining accounts and anecdotes as seem most likely to persuade the younger part of our readers that God governs the world, and that His providence extends to the meanest person and most minute events.

The section opens with an extract from Flavel's *Mystery of Providence*—

O what a world of rarities are to be found in Providence! The blind, heedless world makes nothing of them: they

cannot find one sweet morsel, where a gracious soul would make a rich feast.

An account of the Wexford Rebellion in 1798 follows, with an anecdote of a servant who cared for her aged parents and was herself cared for by a gracious Providence. Thrilling and wonderful stories, gathered from history and biography, or original experiences sent in by contributors, appeared for many years in the *Magazine*, and bore the fruit of quickened faith in a host of lives.

Emerson speaks lightly of those who believe in 'a Pistareen-Providence, which, whenever the good man wants a dinner, makes that somebody shall knock at his door, and leave half a dollar.'[1]

But the man who has enjoyed such help in his extremity does not speak lightly of it. He knows too well what he owes to the care of God to fail to wonder at the strange way in which hearts are touched with pity for the destitute.

Benson died in 1821, and next year the familiar section disappears, though a promise was made in the third series of the *Magazine* to deal with 'Remarkable events, displaying the operations of Divine Providence towards nations or individuals.'

No one can really estimate the influence of that introduction into the world of providential wonders. One testimony has recently been given which expresses

[1] *The Conduct of Life*: 'Fate.'

the feeling of many. The Rev. F. W. Macdonald says that among the sets of volumes in his father's study were the *Methodist Magazines.*

I must pay my tribute here to those old magazines, companions of my childhood's Sunday afternoons, foster-parents of my imagination in its earliest growth, and of my youthful piety in those first workings, which are at once so quaint and pathetic. Their contents were distributed under certain fixed headings, such as 'The Providence of God Asserted,' 'The Works of God Displayed,' &c., which prepared the mind, and pointed the moral, as it were, beforehand.

After referring to the latter section, Mr. Macdonald says—

But 'The Providence of God Asserted' yielded still keener delight. There I made acquaintance with the stranger who suddenly opens the door of the widow's cottage where the children are crying for bread, and places a bag of money on the table; and with the dog who insists upon following the traveller to his room in the lonely inn, and drags a would-be robber and murderer from under the bed.[1]

There is some danger in dwelling too much on remarkable providences. An event which is thus described may be susceptible of a simpler explanation. It may be the outcome of some unexpected and undetected coincidence, and may really be less remarkable than many things which attract little attention. The most remarkable providences are really to be

[1] *In a Nook with a Book*, p. 9.

found in the general course of events, in the daily mercies and homely events of our lives, in the manifest guidance of the course of history and the progress of the Church. Here is the field where Providence is most signally at work. Some events which are

claimed as miraculous may very well bear a different explanation; but if others remained, I should still prefer to look at them from the side of Providence, rather as steps of a divine plan which might need to be declared, than as exertions of a divine power which could not need to be further proved than it was already. However great may be the mighty hand and outstretched arm, still greater is the guiding and directing power which any theistic belief compels us to see in the general course of the history.[1]

Nevertheless we have our personal record of divine help, and it is as precious to us as the remarkable providences which they traced in their lives were to the great Bible saints.

The range of what we may call remarkable providences, outstanding instances of help and deliverance, is wider than we sometimes suppose. Newman shows how God speaks to all.

Who is there, for instance, but has been favoured with answers to prayer, such that, at the time, he has felt he never could again be unbelieving? Who has not had strange coincidences in the course of his life which brought before him, in an overpowering way, the hand of God? Who has not had thoughts come upon him with a kind of

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 19.

mysterious force, for his warning or direction? And some persons, perhaps, experience stranger things still. Wonderful providences have, before now, been brought about by means of dreams; or in other still more unusual ways Almighty God has at times interposed.

Newman says that the study of such things makes thoughtful persons

begin to have a sort of faith in the divine meaning of the accidents (as they are called) of life, and a readiness to take impressions from them, which may easily become excessive, and which, whether excessive or not, is sure to be ridiculed by the world at large as superstition. Yet, considering Scripture tells us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered by God, that all things are ours, and that all things work together for our good, it does certainly encourage us in thus looking out for His presence in everything that happens, however trivial, and in holding that to religious ears even the bad world prophesies of Him.[1]

Enthusiasm is apt to lay undue stress upon mysterious or remarkable providences. All God's dealings with men are wonderful, and those that are least regarded now may shine out by-and-by above the rest.

While there is abundant room in the method of Providence for wonderful conjunctions and recurrences intended by God, we must on that very account be the more on our guard against that mystical and speculative spirit which would multiply them without evidence. The intricacy of God's procedure, while it admits of His appointing mysterious

[1] *Parochial Sermons*, vi. ser. 17, pp. 248–50.

connexions between events, also furnishes a field in which human fancy and conjecture will delight to sport. The human spirit has often wandered in the mazes of Divine Providence without a pathway to keep it in the right direction, and invented correspondences and analogies which were never thought of by the Creator of the world. The arts of divination, necromancy, and astrology have betaken them to these misty regions, whence it has been most difficult to dislodge them.[1]

Is there any means by which we may interpret such events? Dr. M'Cosh thinks that when we can trace a natural, moral, or religious tie we may find

designed combinations, many and wonderful, between the various events of Divine Providence. Read in the spirit of faith, striking relations will everywhere manifest themselves. What singular unions of two streams at the proper place to help on the exertions of the great and good! What curious intersection of cords to catch the wicked as in a net, when they are prowling as wild beasts![2]

Events joined by an observable invariable law illustrate the natural tie. When physical events support moral ends or promote religious purposes, the tie is moral or religious.

We do not believe in mere Occasionalism. Divine Providence is unceasing in its care for the world, and we must not speak as though remarkable providences stood out in contrast to its ordinary methods. They are rather times when men's eyes are opened to discern

[1] M'Cosh, *The Method of the Divine Government*, p. 196.
[2] Ibid., p. 198.

the hand of God—when some escape from danger, some relief in necessity, brings home to the heart the divine mercy that watches over human lives. We hold that

God can directly alter the course of events if He will, in answer to human prayer, or without it. The ordinary doctrine of Providence sets this element at the front. In popular speech, indeed, Providence chiefly means intervention and overruling. Events that show wisdom and kindness are called, most unfortunately, 'providences.' . . . But we must firmly hold that Providence is more than such occasional intervention of God, and must beware of the temptation to see His hand in what we like, and nowhere else. If our doctrine of Providence is a doctrine of divine occasionalism, it will desert us in time of need. Nor is it best to speak much of intervention, or interposition, lest it appear that God is not in the order of the world except at special moments. Yet the ability of the free God to alter the course of events if He will is by all means to be held fast. Providence is the indwelling governance of the world by a God so free that He may influence it as He wishes. Though our faith in this steady governance is so strong that we do not ask Him to alter the course of events, still His power to do so is essential to a clear and restful doctrine of His Providence.[1]

No providences are more remarkable than those concerned in the emergence of great men at some crisis in human affairs. Our own history turns our minds to Hampden and Cromwell, or reminds us how Nelson and Wellington were raised up to counteract the

[1] W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 152.

schemes of Napoleon and to save Europe from a crushing military despotism. Holland is still full of William the Silent, whose leadership of the forces of patriotism and liberty against the tyranny of Philip II. is one of the most remarkable providences of Dutch history.

Great events also furnish many signal instances of providential interposition.

The winds that sunk the Spanish Armada, which threatened at once the Protestant religion and the liberties of England; and, again, the favourable breezes which enabled William of Orange, when these privileges were endangered, to escape the fleet that was ready to seize him, and land in safety on our shores: these are providential occurrences, in which pure minds have ever delighted to discover the hand of God; and this, too, with reason, according to the principles which we have been developing.[1]

In the midst of the Corn Law struggle, 'Cobden was aware that, in words used at the time, "Three weeks of rain when the wheat was ripening would rain away the corn law." Everybody knows how the rain came, and alarming signs of a dreadful famine in Ireland came.'[2]

The field of individual life will furnish abundant instances of remarkable providences. No one will hesitate thus to describe John Wesley's escape from the fire at Epworth. To the end of his life that was for him a crowning instance of the guardian care of

[1] M'Cosh, *The Method of the Divine Government*, pp. 203–4.
[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, Book ii. chap. x.

God. 'Rob Roy' MacGregor never failed to pay his tribute to the gracious Providence which watched over him as an infant of five weeks old when the *Kent*, East Indiaman, was burnt in the Bay of Biscay in March, 1825. As soon as those who had been saved from the burning vessel reached Falmouth, the captain, with his crew and passengers, went to the church to give thanks to the God of Providence. 'It was a thrilling moment when all voices, some choking with emotion, uttered the words, "We bless Thee for our creation, *preservation*, and all the blessings of this life!"'[1]

John G. Paton's life was a tissue of providences. More than a hundred deliverances from death are noted in his wonderful autobiography. Scarcely less impressive is the story of 'Faizabad Elliott.'

The danger of interpreting events in our own favour is not to be ignored. Cromwell's address on July 4, 1653, in his council-chamber, dwells on

> that series of providences, wherein the Lord hath dispensed wonderful things to these nations, from the beginnings of our troubles to this very day. . . . Although it be fit for us to entitle our failings and miscarriages to ourselves, yet the gloriousness of our work may well be attributed to God Himself, and may be called His strange work.

There is no doubt in the Protector's mind as to the divine leading. 'Truly God had called you to this work by, I think, as wonderful providences as ever passed upon the sons of men in so short a time.'

[1] *John MacGregor*, pp. 20–1.

He was not ignorant, however, of the danger of misinterpreting the ways of God. In 1657, when the title of King was pressed on him, he says: 'I hope I shall ever have, for the rule of my conscience, for my information, so truly men that have been [led] in the dark paths through the providence and dispensations of God.'

A man may 'impute his own blindness and folly to Providence sinfully, yet that must be at my peril.' 'I must needs say I have had a great deal of experience of Providence, and though it is no rule without or against the Word, yet it is a very good exposition of the Word in many cases. . . . Truly the providence of God has laid this title [of King] aside providentially.' God had 'seemed providentially not only to strike at the family but at the name.' He tries to trace 'the providences of God, how they have led us hitherto.' That is for him clear ground.[1]

Cromwell, however, lays himself open to the charge of looking at things from the standpoint of his own prepossessions and interests.

The Protector professed to see the hand of God, a special intervention, when he succeeded, and things went well. It was not the arm of flesh that had done these things. They were remarkable providences, and the like. There is not a more perilous or immoral habit than the sanctifying of success.[2]

[1] Stainer's *Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 87, 89, 105, 303–4, 319.
[2] Acton, *Modern History*, p. 204.

It makes a man presume on divine favour and forget that Providence is only on his side as long as he does his own part faithfully.

Pope deals with the difficulty caused by what we may call remarkable providences. He looks around and sees the reign of law.

> The Gen'ral Order, since the world began,
> Is kept in Nature, and is kept in man.[1]

Then he asks his famous questions—

> Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause
> Prone for His favourites to reverse His laws?
> Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
> Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?
> On air or sea new motions be imprest,
> Oh, blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast?
> When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
> Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
> For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall? [2]

Wesley says—

We answer, If it please God to continue the life of any of His servants, He will suspend that or any other law of nature: the stone shall not fall; the fire shall not burn; the floods shall not flow; or, He will give His angels charge, and in their hands shall they bear them up, through and above all dangers.[3]

Emerson can see no remarkable providences. 'The diseases, the elements, fortune, gravity, lightning, respect no persons. The way of Providence is a little rude.'[4]

[1] *Essay on Man*, i. 172–2. [2] Ibid., iv. 121–30.
[3] *Works*, vi. 322. [4] *The Conduct of Life*: 'Fate.'

There is no escape from the difficulty in the thought that Nature is capricious. Faith in God would be impossible if Nature were to disobey the rules stamped upon her. But, as Dr. M'Cosh says in criticizing Pope's lines—

> The volcano may burst, the tempest may rage, and the cliff may fall, an instant before or an instant after the time when these events might have been followed with fatal consequences; or some passing impulse of feeling may have hurried the individual away; or some other agent of Nature may have hastened to shelter or defend him, and all by a special arrangement intended by God from the very beginning.[1]

These remarkable providences, as we call them, bring out the meaning of that divine care which watches over human life and history. It is never-ceasing in its operation; but for the most part it is unobtrusive. It does not force itself on our attention, and we scarcely wake up to our daily debt till we are brought face to face with some signal instance of its exercise. Even then we are amazed at the homely methods by which the goal is reached. There is no ostentation about even the more remarkable working of Divine Providence.

Those unforeseen accidents which so often control the lot of men, constitute a *superstratum* in the system of human affairs, wherein, peculiarly, the Divine Providence holds empire for the accomplishment of its special purposes.

[1] *Method of the Divine Government*, p. 183.

It is from this hidden and inexhaustible mine of chances—chances as we must call them—that the Governor of the world draws, with unfathomable skill, the materials of His dispensations towards each individual of mankind. The world of Nature affords no instances of complicated and exact contrivance comparable to that which so arranges the vast chaos of contingencies as to produce, with unerring precision, a special order of events adapted to the character of every individual of the human family.[1]

We have been dealing in this chapter with a subject that is confessedly difficult. The general laws of Nature hold, and we do not expect exceptions to be made to them in individual cases. Fire will burn, and water will drown, unless deliverance comes. But God has means of working on men's minds and guiding the course of events which may preserve life, or guide and control it in extraordinary ways. Our doctrine of Providence must not lead us to presume on providential help by neglecting wise precautions, or to accuse God when disaster befalls those who have come under the operation of laws of nature which involve trouble or death. Yet experience endorses and emphasizes the psalmist's golden saying—

> The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous,
> And His ears are open unto their cry (Ps. xxxiv. 15).

It may be interesting to add an extract from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae,* which was a

[1] Isaac Taylor, *History of Enthusiasm,* pp. 131-2.

text-book of the Middle Ages, held in almost as high repute as the later *De Imitatione Christi* itself.

Even as every craftsman thinks over and marks out his work in his mind, ere he take it in hand, and then carries it out altogether, so this changing lot that we call Fate proceeds according to His forethought and purpose, even as He resolveth that it shall be done. Though it seems to us manifold, partly good, partly evil, yet it is to Him good, pure and simple, for He bringeth it all to a goodly conclusion, and doeth for good all that He doeth. When it is done, we call it Fate; before it was God's forethought and His purpose. . . . Now some things in this world are subject to Fate, others are in no way subject; but Fate, and the things that are subject to her, are subject to Divine Providence. Some sages, however, say that Fate rules both weal and woe of every man. But I say, as do all Christian men, that it is the divine purpose that rules them, not Fate; and I know that it judges all things very rightly, though unthinking men may not think so. They hold that all are good that work their will, and no wonder, for they are blinded by the darkness of their sins. But Divine Providence understandeth it all most rightly, though we in our folly think it goes awry, being unable to discern what is right. He, however, judgeth all right, though at times it seems to us otherwise.[1]

[1] *King Alfred's Version*, Book iv. chap. xxxix. pp. xvii. 150–3.

XIII

PROVIDENTIAL METHODS

There's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow.
Hamlet, v. 2. 231.

The doctrine of a particular Providence is what exceeding few people understand.—WESLEY, *Works*, xii. 183.

'Prayer engageth Providence' (Isa. xlv. 11).—FLAVEL.

Since a man is bound no further to himself than to do wisely, chance is only to trouble them that stand upon chance.—SIDNEY, *Arcadia*.

The vulgar conception of Providence, as of a sloppy and inefficient Power, who repairs in a belated and theatrical manner his own mistakes.—A. C. BENSON, *Cornhill*, 1906, p. 470.

Providence has a wild, rough, incalculable road to its end, and it is no use to try to whitewash its huge, mixed instrumentalities, to dress up that terrific benefactor in a clean shirt and white neckcloth of a student in divinity.—EMERSON, *The Conduct of Life*: 'Fate.'

Theology distinguishes *Providentia universalis*, embracing also nature, from *specialis*, referring to the kingdom of rational beings, and *specialissima*, referring only to believers. This distinction would be erroneous, if the meaning were that Providence is less observable in one province than in another.—DORNER, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, ii. 62.

The concursus of God stands in relation to the reality of the world which manifests itself already in living activity. . . . The doctrine of conservation is thus essentially the doctrine of the divine *concursus*, and is of decisive importance in opposition to Acosmism and Deism.—DORNER, *System of Christian Doctrine*, ii. 44–5.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The methods of Providence	277
The reign of law in the natural and spiritual world	278
Is Providence general or particular?	279
Belief in special Providence	281
Abuses of this doctrine	282
An impressive study	284
Sir James Stephen's interest in the subject	285
Mysteries and their explanation	286
Lord Selborne and Mr. Gladstone	287
George Eliot	287
Human energies used and developed	288
The way that Providence stirs up its agents	288
Light thrown on mysteries by belief in a future life	290
Death a providential method	290
Choice of special instruments	291
Prayer the link between the Divine and Human Providence	293
Pleasure in studying these methods	295

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XIII

THE more we study Divine Providence the more eager we are to gain some conception of the methods it employs to accomplish its purposes. The human mind cannot grasp what the care of the universe involves. No man has ever been so presumptuous as to attempt to order and guide the world as a whole. That, however, is the daily task of Providence. It has its plan for the earth, and for every living thing upon it.

How far can we hope to track the methods of Providence? It is clear that general laws must occupy a large place in the scheme of government. There is an established order of Nature. The universe is a vast machine constructed for a special purpose. And the way in which it has fulfilled that purpose for ages is itself a mighty witness to Providence. 'He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down' (Ps. civ. 19). The reign of law which has made some men deny that there is any Providence, is really a proof that the divine rule embraces all things. Science in every realm, in astronomy and botany, in its study of animals and men, is increasing

the force of the argument for Providence. General laws, then, stand out as the foremost feature in the methods of Providence. The order stamped on Nature is so wonderful that it steadily fulfils its appointed task through all the ages at the bidding of God. These general laws are divinely impressed on Nature.

Assuming as a fact the existence and providence of God, the whole of our observation of Nature proves to us by incontrovertible evidence that the rule of His government is by means of second causes; that all facts, or at least all physical facts, follow uniformly upon given physical conditions, and never occur but when the appropriate collection of physical conditions is realized.[1]

This must not be understood to mean that God has retired into a remote corner of the universe whilst a machinery of 'second causes' occupies His place. The expedient of second causes has been adopted to avoid difficulties arising from the existence of evil, but Science has shown us that God is everywhere present in His world.[2]

The moral and spiritual realm is guided by general laws, as is the natural world. In the order of Providence certain definite results accompany virtue and vice. These arrangements of Providence are signs on which side God is. They frown upon sin and evil. Huxley speaks of 'that fixed order of Nature which sends social disorganization upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after moral trespasses.'[3]

[1] Mill, *Theism*, p. 233. [2] See *Lux Mundi*, p. 100.
[3] *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 146.

Obedience to the commands of God leads to the highest results in the sphere of character. Honourable conduct wins the approval of conscience and the confidence of good men. The Sermon on the Mount deals with this general method of Divine Providence. 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you' (Matt. vi. 33). Religion rests on this broad basis. God

works through our natural faculties and circumstances of life. Still what happens to us in Providence is in all essential respects what His voice was to those whom He addressed when on earth; whether He commands by a visible presence, or by a voice, or by our consciences, it matters not, so that we may feel it to be a command.[1]

When we pass into a narrower sphere the difficulties as to providential methods become more acute. Does God confine His action to general laws, or does He take pity on His creatures when they need special help? Does He save in times of sickness and trouble, does He guide in perplexity, does He answer prayer? Dr. M'Cosh discusses this question with much fullness. He says—

There have been disputes among thinking minds in all ages as to whether the providence of God is general or particular. Philosophers, so called, have generally taken the former view, and divines the latter. There has been a wide difference between the views of these two parties, but there is no necessary antagonism between the doctrines

[1] Newman, *Parochial Sermons*, viii. p. 23.

themselves. The general providence of God, properly understood, reaches to the most particular and minute objects and events; and the particular providence of God becomes general by its embracing every particular.

Those who suppose that there is a general, but that there cannot be a particular providence, are limiting God by ideas derived from human weakness.[1]

Strictly speaking, no doubt, the distinction between general and special providence is out of place. God's care is equally exercised over all His creatures.[2] Men are apt, in attending to details, to overlook wider interests; God is not thus limited. He rules the universe, yet beautifies each leaf and flower. He cares for the sparrow and lavishes His love on man. His hand is as manifest in little things as in great, nor does the larger interest suffer because the lesser one is cared for: 'There is no searching of His understanding.' The exercise of a particular providence over every detail of our lives is 'altogether easy to Him.'[3]

Dr. Newton Clarke, in his discussion of the subject of Providence, shows that man is part of the natural order.

Providence, however paternal, does not exempt any one from gravitation, or dependence for health upon food and oxygen, or danger from poisons. The regularities upon which life depends are such as Nature orders. So are the regularities that terminate life. Decay and death await men as well as beasts and trees. Accidents come to all.[4]

[1] *The Method of the Divine Government*, p. 181.
[2] Pope, *A Higher Catechism of Theology*, p. 108.
[3] O. D. Watkins, *The Divine Providence*, p. 7.
[4] *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 148.

It would be impossible, however, to face the future if we felt ourselves simply the creatures of law and order, and had no vision of a loving Father who not only framed the world to sustain and bless His children, but is also mindful of their changing needs and wants. This thought saves us from any sense of the tyranny of law.

> There are ways of looking at the universe which make it all fixed and fated, and forge laws of Nature into laws of iron. There is no pity for man in them, and destiny looks down like the Gorgon's head that turns to stone. Our actions have irrevocable consequences, and we find no place of repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears.[1]

That is not the doctrine of the Bible. It brings us into the presence of a divine Friend whose 'eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him' (2 Chron. xvi. 9), and of a wisdom which makes all things work together for good to them who love God.

We believe, then, in a special providence by which God steps in to adjust the working of His vast machine, to help and guide in times of danger and perplexity. Epicureans and Deists denied God this door of entrance to His world, or maintained that He never used it. But the histories of nations, churches, and individuals all bear traces of such interpositions. Men have called it chance. But 'it is not too much to say that even in secular history and its records the thing meant by this

[1] Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, p. 178.

name may be traced as one of the most operative causes of great events. For this element we have a name, and we call it Providence—the providence of God!'[1]

Some so-called interpositions may, perhaps, be resolved into illustrations of the unsuspected perfection of the general laws and ordinary rule of God, but there are cases which we cannot thus explain. Nor have Christian men any doubt as to this special providence. The Bible is full of it; our Lord bears emphatic testimony to it. No arbitrary interference with the established order of Nature is required, yet there are a thousand ways in which God can warn, guide, and succour those who trust in Him. Wesley speaks of those who laid it down as an unquestionable maxim that

> The Universal Cause
> Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws.[2]

If God never deviated from general laws, he says, there never was a miracle in the world.

> Did the Almighty confine Himself to these general laws when He divided the Red Sea? when He commanded the waters to stand on a heap, and made a way for His redeemed to pass over?[3]

The doctrine of special providence has in all ages been abused and distorted by fanaticism. Isaac Taylor has a notable chapter on 'Enthusiastic Perversions of

[1] Dr. J. E. Cumming, *The Book of Esther*, p. 71.
[2] Pope, *Essay on Man*, iv. 35–6.
[3] *Works*, vi 321.

the Doctrine of a Particular Providence.' Such a temper produces much mischief. The enthusiast

believes, and he believes justly, that every seeming fortuity is under the absolute control of the divine hand; but in virtue of the peculiar interest he supposes himself to have on high, he is tempted to think that these contingencies are very much at his command. This belief naturally causes him to pay more regard to the unusual than to the common course of events. In contemplating God as the disposer of chances, he becomes forgetful of Him who is the governor of the world by known and permanent laws.[1]

When such interpositions are regarded as more certain guides than the general rule of prudence or morality there is imminent danger of shipwreck. 'The wheel of toil stands still while the devotee implores assistance from above.'[2] 'The bottles of heaven are never stopped but to gratify his taste for fine weather.'[3] Necromancy, witchcraft, astrology, have tried to unravel the mysteries of Providence and made the credulous their dupes and victims. The inevitable reaction has followed. Enthusiasm when thwarted is apt to generate

impious petulance. If we encumber the providence of God with unwarranted expectations, it will be difficult not so to murmur under disappointment as those do who think themselves defrauded of their right.[4]

Belief in a particular Providence must never ignore the universal Providence 'which secures individual

[1] *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, 6th edn., p. 125.
[2] Ibid., p. 127. [3] Ibid., p. 138. [4] Ibid., p. 146.

interests, consistently with the well-being of the whole.' It requires divine wisdom to accomplish such a task, but that wisdom is abundantly equal to it.

The lot of each must therefore be shapen by reasons drawn from many, and often from remote, quarters. Yet in effecting this complex combination of parts, infinite wisdom prevents any clashing of the lesser with the larger movements; and we may feel assured that on the grounds either of mere equity or of beneficence, the dispensations of Providence are as compactly perfect towards each individual of mankind as if he were the sole inhabitant of an only world.[1]

The method in which the designs of Providence are accomplished forms one of the most impressive of studies. We cannot always discover the whole plan, but we see enough to make us confident that Providence is at work, and to inspire us with confidence to do our own part patiently. Dean Hook thought it was the fault of his day 'to think, and to act, as if a man could do everything, and to forget God's special providence.' That produced in the religious world a spirit of restlessness and a lack of calm devotion to duty. The cure for such a spirit is to be found in knowledge of the ways of God.

Herein especially is manifested the perfection of the divine wisdom, that the most surprising conjunction of events are brought about by the simplest means, and in a manner so perfectly in harmony with the ordinary course of human affairs that the hand of the Mover is ever hidden

[1] *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, 6th edn., p. 148.

beneath second causes and is descried only by the eye of pious affection. This is in fact the great miracle of Providence—that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes. Countless series of events are travelling on from remote quarters towards the same point; and each series moves in the beaten track of natural occurrences; but their intersection at the very moment in which they meet, shall serve, perhaps, to give a new direction to the affairs of an empire. The *materials* of the machinery of Providence are of common quality; but their combination displays nothing less than infinite skill.[1]

Sir James Stephen wrote in 1852 to Bishop Wilson of Calcutta—

Some of my reviewers have upbraided me with misapprehending or misrepresenting what Messrs. Comte, Mill, and Grote extol as the Positive system of historical inquiry, and with having written unphilosophically, not to say nonsensically, in asserting the doctrine of a particular Providence. I am not philosopher or theologian enough to produce any compendious vindication, or even statement, of that doctrine, on the precise accuracy of which I could myself rely, although I have an indestructible faith in the doctrine itself. Again I shall be most thankful for information where I could find the most profound and complete investigation of it—that is, the precise meaning of the statement that 'not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father.' That is, in my view, the very essence of the philosophy of history; and I would gladly return to it if I were quite sure of not losing my way in the intricacies of so great a subject.[2]

[1] Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, pp. 134–5.
[2] *Letters of Sir James Stephen*, p. 155.

As to the perplexities and problems which we cannot solve, the *Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained* (pp. 67–8) is very suggestive.

How is Providence mysterious in the track of it?—In attaining its end by contrary-like means; such as, making Joseph's imprisonment the step to his being second in the kingdom, and the casting of Daniel into the lion's den the path to his higher preferment.

Will not dark providences be opened to the saints some time or other?—Yes; for says Christ, 'What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter' (John xiii. 7).

When will the mystery of Providence be opened to the saints?—It shall be fully unveiled at the end of the day, when the mystery thereof shall be finished, and all the labyrinths, wherein the saints were led, fully unwinded (Rev. x. 6, 7).

Isaac Taylor thought there was some ground to suppose that our imperfect and even mistaken notions of the unseen and the future worlds may be used to accomplish the designs of Providence.[1] Mystery is part of our education, and there is no reason to suppose that it will be struck out of the curriculum till every scholar has received his training. It is a test of character, a touchstone of virtue and obedience.

Undoubtedly the chief characteristic of Providence is that of veiling from man, not merely the distant future, but even the proximate, and often the contingent results of his own actions.[2]

[1] *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, p. 120.
[2] Steward, *Mediatorial Sovereignty*, ii. 351.

How Providence can reach the mind and heart may be shown by two testimonies given by eminent Christian men of our own time. Lord Selborne thus refers to a crisis in his life—

I had experience then (as I have had at other times also) of the manner in which, under the divine constitution of the world, impressions made by outward—sometimes by very common—things may be borne in upon the spiritual nature of a man, so as to be for the time as special revelations, oracles of God addressed to his immediate circumstances, and his individual case.[1]

Mr. Gladstone also bore witness.

On most occasions of very sharp pressure or trial, some word of Scripture has come home to me as if borne on eagles' wings. Many could I recollect. The Psalms are the great storehouse.[2]

George Eliot dwells on the same thought. The form of the interposition in her view has changed, but the special providence is still at work.

In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's.[3]

[1] *Memorials*, p. 392.
[2] Morley's *Life of W. E. Gladstone*, Book II. chap. vi.
[3] *Silas Marner*, end of chap. xiv.

Divine Providence accomplishes its purposes largely through human instruments. Man has to be trained to fill his part. Hunger and thirst are spurs to diligence; fire and storm are teachers of prudence. All help to shape human character and conduct. They are not merely physical contingencies, but powerful allies of the moral government which Providence everywhere reveals. The conditions under which man lives form a school where rewards and punishments are meted out in a way that promotes the highest moral and spiritual interests.[1]

Throughout the ages Divine Providence has been stirring up man to develop his powers and avail himself of the boundless resources of Nature. There has been a progressive unfolding of the wonders of the earth and the riches of science as human civilization fitted men to make use of these gifts of Providence. The thirst for knowledge, the love of adventure, even the greed for wealth, have led to discoveries that have enriched the world. Lord Acton thought that an amusing article might be written on 'The Philosopher's Stone,' showing how often astrology had been the cradle of astronomy and alchemy of chemistry, how an opinion must be made absurd before it can be popular or pursued with success, since every truth requires alloy. He pointed out how the Reformation produced the Reforming Council which people had desired for a whole century. Columbus sought the East Indies and found the West. All this he regarded as providential. If

[1] See W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 147–50.

appeal were not made to their curiosity or ambition men would not go so zealously after prosaic ends. Seekers of the unfindable have thus gained practical results.[1] Dr. Sanday says—

> Dr. Du Bose has lately told us, and I agree with him, that Scepticism, too, has its place in the ways of Providence. By Scepticism I mean the tendency to question one's data.[2]

Dr. Orr does not hesitate to acknowledge that, despite its attendant evils, rationalistic criticism 'has been productive under the providence of God, of many benefits, which in large measure counterbalance, if they do not outweigh these evils.'[3]

How large a part trouble and loss have filled in providential dealing with the careless and unawakened! God's goodness is never seen in brighter colours than in the love that has spared no warning, if only those who were going astray might be led into the ways of peace and purity.

The sadder side of human progress is evident enough. Why should God allow so much blindness and wrong to bar the world's onward march? Has He not to train His child and instrument, and is this not the way in which the lessons are stamped on the minds of generations? Things 'only comparatively good or even relatively evil' are allowed to hold the ground till a better order can be introduced.

[1] *Lord Acton and his Circle*, p. 125.
[2] *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, p. 156.
[3] *The Problem of the Old Testament*, p. 19.

Coleridge does not hesitate to describe revolution as 'a process of the Divine Providence,' and speaks of the hand of Providence which has 'disciplined all Europe into sobriety, as men tame wild elephants, by alternate blows and caresses.'[1]

There are points which we do not understand, but not a few perplexities are lighted up by larger views of human destiny. Workers seem to be snatched away from spheres of usefulness in all realms of human activity just when they are able to render conspicuous service. But if we believe in a future life, where every power finds ampler exercise, we may understand that no training received on earth is wasted.

Surely the idea is inadmissible that an instrument wrought up, at so much expense to a polished fitness for service, is destined to be suspended for ever on the palace walls of heaven, as a glittering bauble, no more to make proof of its temper.[2]

Death is itself a signal mark of the Providence that rules the world. It not only grants discharge to the worn-out labourer, but it clears the stage for his successor.

Far better that death should remove the men callous to abuse and hostile to reform, and that men of warmer impulses, higher ideals, more generous enthusiasm should fill their place. The treasures of the past are not therefore

[1] *Biographia Literaria*, chap. x., edited by J. Shawcross, i. p. 122.
[2] Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, p. 156.

lost, but made the solid basis for future progress. And even for the individual, death is in itself no unhappy fate.[1]

No mind or heart could bear the strain of more than one lifetime. A young Christ Church tutor wrote in one of his last letters—

> I think that man is happiest who is taken while his hand is still warm on the plough, who has not lived long enough to feel his strength failing him, and his work every day worse done.[2]

The future life must be taken into account in forming an estimate of God's providential dealing with men. The divine goodness can there mete out a rich reward for suffering and loss endured on earth. That unseen world will set its seal on faithful lives, as our Lord taught in one of His most impressive parables: 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (Matt. xiii. 43).

No study of providential methods would be complete which ignored the choice of special human instruments to carry out God's purposes. General laws guide towards certain conclusions, then God chooses His instrument to finish the work He has in hand. There is an election to service which explains much in God's providential methods which has been blindly and

[1] Professor Peake deals suggestively with this subject in *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, pp. 138–40. See also Martineau's fine discussion in *A Study of Religion*, ii. pp. 75–130.

[2] York Powell's *Life*, ii. 360. Richard Shute, born at Sydenham, 1849; buried at Woking, 1886. His wife had the words engraved on his tomb.

foolishly regarded as favouritism. Providence selects a man, a church, a nation, and raises them to commanding influence. These favours are calls to service. They are not means for the glorification or the gratification of those who receive them, but means of usefulness. 'It is,' as Roger Ascham said, 'a part of the Divine Providence of the world that the strong should influence the weak.'[1] The gifts are withdrawn when they are merely used to minister to personal vanity or selfish advantage. Those who are thus chosen are expected to set a higher standard of unselfishness, and to illustrate a loftier standard of living, not only by their words, but by their lives. In that sense W. von Humboldt's saying is true: 'Providence does not favour individuals, but the deep wisdom of its counsels extends to the instruction and ennoblement of all.'

Those who are guided by quieter providential methods must not fail to discern the hand that leads them to their spheres. God is as much at work in these less obtrusive ways as in those that attract greater attention. The Bishop of Carlisle points this out in speaking of the means by which men are moved to give themselves to the work of the ministry.

> The instrument of your call may have been neither rocking earthquake, nor flaming fire, nor rending wind, but simply the still small voice of some of the ordinary providences of God—the example of a friend, a parent's hope, a sentence in a book, an appeal in a sermon, a sympathetic glimpse of

[1] *Schoolmaster*, p. 3.

the world with its sins and remorse, its laughter and tears, its failures and aspirations, its griefs and joys, its hopes and despairs, its obvious need of redemption, yet its amazing ignorance of God.[1]

When we have laid due stress on all the operation of general laws, all the influence of human prudence and obedience, we must still recognize that Providence has a large place as Residuary Legatee. God must step in as the master does when the young learner stumbles. He must guide and help His servants. He must overrule errors and mistakes. Experience proves that He does it. 'God writes straight on crooked lines.'

Prayer is the link between the Divine and the Human Providence. It is reasonable to expect such a partnership to be provided with a means of communication and opportunities for seeking and gaining help. The man of Providence needs to be kept in close and constant touch with the God of Providence. God insists on it. 'For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel.'

The partnership would fail disastrously if we could not go to our divine Helper with our need and ignorance. He knows, yet we must tell Him. That is our safeguard and our comfort. We are being used as God's instruments to complete His work in the world, to mould it after His likeness, to stamp on it His seal. Justin Martyn says that the philosophers of his day

[1] *Quiet Hours with the Ordinal*, pp. 9–10.

seek to convince us also, that the Divinity extends His care to the great whole, and to the several kinds, but not to me and to you, not to men as individuals. Hence it is useless to pray to Him, for everything occurs according to the unchangeable laws of an endless cycle.[1]

If that were true it would be fatal to the partnership. The tasks before the humblest instrument of Providence are too responsible, the issues too vital, to be undertaken without divine guidance. Prayer is the appeal for wisdom, for grace, for succour. Without it we are helpless. God has not left His children destitute of the means of adjustment to His own will. Our Saviour's teaching is clear and emphatic. The Sermon on the Mount is steeped in prayer. The Lord's Prayer provides the disciples with an approved form of appeal to the resources of Divine Providence. Prayer and prudent conduct are steadfast allies, never out of harmony with each other, but rather helpers of one another. The man who has done his part faithfully may expect the Hearer of prayer to support and succour him in answer to his cry for help and deliverance. Dr. Sanday says—

There is no Christian whose experience does not tell him that prayers are answered on a very large scale indeed. This experience points beyond itself. It points to the conclusion that the Power behind the Universe is in touch with human spirits and human wills. It does not prove that God will violate His own laws, but I think it does prove that, within the conditions imposed by those laws, He does interest Himself in human affairs. In other words,

[1] *Dial. c. Tryph. Jud.*, beginning.

there is a reciprocal relation—an actively reciprocal relation —between the Power without us and the spirit or personality within us.[1]

The methods of Providence furnish a wonderful theme for reverent study. Our eyes may sometimes indeed be fixed on men and circumstances so that we fail to trace the hand of God in His mercies; but reverent search into these mysteries will not lack its reward.

For in the entrance of Philosophy, when the second causes, which are next unto the senses, doe offer themselves to the mind of Man, and the mind itself cleaves unto them and dwells there, an oblivion of the highest cause may creep in; but when a man passeth on farther and beholds the dependency, continuation, and confederacy of causes, and the works of Providence, than according to the allegory of the Poets,[2] he will easily believe that the highest linke of Nature's chaine must needs be tyed to the foot of Jupiter's chaire.[3]

Our study of the methods of Divine Providence gives us confidence in its wisdom and the results at which it will arrive. Flavel loved to think of these things. He anticipates, as did St. John in his Apocalypse (Rev. v. 6–10), the crowning delight of those revelations which are yet in reserve.

How great a pleasure is it to discern how the most wise God is providentially steering all to the port of His own

[1] *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, p. 204.
[2] Homer, *Iliad*, 9.
[3] Bacon, *Of the Advancement of Learning*, Lib. I., chap. i. end.

praise and His people's happiness, whilst the whole world is busily employed in managing the sails and tugging at the oars, with a quite opposite design! To see how they promote His design by opposing it, and fulfil His will by resisting it, enlarge His Church by scattering it, and make their rest to become more sweet by making their condition so restless in the world—this is pleasant to observe in general; but to record and note its particular designs upon ourselves, with what profound wisdom, infinite tenderness, and incessant vigilance it hath managed all that concerns us, is ravishing and transporting![1]

[1] Flavel, *Mystery of Providence.*

XIV

PROVIDENCE AND ITS CRITICS

It is easier to discover a deficiency in individuals, in states, and in Providence, than to see their real import and value.—Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 37.

> Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
> Alike in what it gives, and what denies.
>
> Pope, *Essay on Man*, i. 87.

The humiliation of this failure was like a providential stroke of the whip.—Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*, p. 296.

What men require is to have all difficulties cleared. And this is, or at least for anything we know to the contrary, it may be, the same, as requiring to comprehend the divine nature, and the whole plan of Providence from everlasting to everlasting.—Butler's *Analogy*, ii. ch. viii. § 4.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Difficulties and objections	299
Voltaire's groan over the world	301
Tennyson troubled by the problem of suffering	302
Manning's anguish	303
The Ignorance of Man	304
Butler's conclusion	305
The discipline of imperfect knowledge	306
Pain increases as Nature evolves	307
Its providential purpose	308
Some striking testimonies	310
A pessimistic view possible	311
Moral evil and human freedom	313
Apparent delays of Providence	314
The need of patience	316
Guizot on the movements of Providence	317
Waiting for light from the Author of the Book	318

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XIV

MANY severe judgements have been passed on Divine Providence. The suffering and wrong which are painfully familiar to thoughtful men have led some to deny that there is any wise and beneficent ruler of the world. Objections to the doctrine of Providence 'have been the same in all ages: the stumbling-blocks of unbelief and the trial of the faith and patience of the saints.'[1]

It is well that the problems should be clearly stated, for explanations are possible which lead to increased confidence in the wise and gracious rule of God. As Richard Baxter put it, 'Nothing is so firmly believed as that which has once been doubted.'

The difficulties are manifest. If any one thinks he finds in them clear evidence that there is no Divine Providence, and describes its dispensations as 'mere events, the natural connexions of which are known,' this 'only raises greater difficulties than are presented by belief in Providence.'[2] The difficulty of unravelling all the causes of an event must be faced, 'whether one

[1] Pope, *Compendium of Theology*, p. 192.
[2] Schmid, *Scientific Creed of a Theologian*, p. 176.

adopts an affirmative or a negative position upon belief in Providence.'[1] The difficulty is still graver when the assertion is made that an 'event was not intended by a determining originator.'[2] To see in these things the 'work of almighty power and of supreme intelligence in a Living God' is a far more reasonable solution than to deny that they reveal any cause or intention.

But the difficulties cannot be ignored. They darken the lives of many who can trace no moral order in the world, no real progress towards a reign of truth and goodness. The Christian solution does not satisfy some of these thinkers. They ask us not to mock their misery by offering 'that farthing-candle of faith in Providence to guide us through the gloom.'[3] Dr. Terry says—

> We may well wonder why the struggle of life should go on through such immense periods of time, and yet reach no end apparently worth such incalculable pains and toil. Why should our heavenly Father, who has all power and wisdom, tolerate such apparent waste of energy? Why permit the long, long times of ignorance, and vice, and wars, and oppressions, and crimes? . . . Alas, the questions of theodicy are many, and it is not given unto any of us to answer them. We can at most see in part, but if we look with care, we shall see enough to establish us in faith and hope and love.[4]

[1] Schmid, *Scientific Creed of a Theologian*, p. 177.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.
[3] Bruce, *The Providential Order*, p. 111.
[4] *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 575.

The Bible has no fear of patient investigation of these problems and mysteries, as the Psalms and the Book of Job bear witness. Nor does St. Paul attempt to ignore the facts. To him they are patent. 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (Rom. viii. 22). 'Cruel and spiteful' are words used by those who think it absurd to contend that God is omnipotent, because on the face of it, seeing the things He has created, He was a sad bungler. Voltaire was of this mind. 'The last utterance of his system is a groan.'[1]

The globe is covered with *chefs-d'œuvre*, but with victims; it is only a vast field of carnage and infection. Every species is pitilessly pursued, torn, eaten on the earth, in the air, and in the waters. Man is more unhappy than all the animals put together; he is continually a prey to two scourges which the animals are ignorant of, unrest and ennui, which are only disgust with himself. He loves life, and he knows that he will die. If he is born to taste some passing pleasures for which he praises Providence, he is born to sufferings without number and to be eaten by worms; he knows it, and the animals do not know it. That fatal idea torments him; he consumes the instant of his detestable existence in making his fellows unhappy, to slaughter them basely for mean wages, to deceive and to be deceived, to plunder and to be plundered, to serve in order to rule, and to repent without ceasing. Except a few sages, the crowd of men is only a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals, and the globe only contains corpses. I tremble

[1] John Cairns, D.D., *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 141.

in turning an attentive gaze on that horrible picture, yet once more to have to complain of the Being of beings.[1]

Tennyson makes King Arthur wrestle with these problems. Sir Bedivere heard in his tent the moanings of the king.

> I found Him in the shining of the stars,
> I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
> But in His ways with men I find Him not.
> I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
> O me! for why is all around us here
> As if some lesser God had made the world,
> But had not force to shape it as he would,
> Till the High God behold it from beyond,
> And enter it, and make it beautiful?[2]

Tennyson himself may represent those who are sorely burdened by the sorrow of the world. His son says—

He was occasionally much troubled with the intellectual problem of the apparent profusion and waste of life, and by the vast amount of sin and suffering throughout the world, for these seemed to militate against the idea of the Omnipotent and All-loving Father.

No doubt in such moments he might possibly have been heard to say what I myself have heard him say: 'An Omnipotent Creator who could make such a painful world isto me *sometimes* as hard to believe in as to believe in blind matter behind everything. The lavish profusion, too, in the natural world appals me, from the growths of the

[1] *Les Adorateurs, ou Les Louanges de Dieu*, Dialogues ii. 194, No. 42.

[2] *The Passing of Arthur.*

tropical forest to the capacity of man to multiply the torrent of babies.'

He would sometimes put forward the old theory that 'The world is part of an infinite plan, incomplete because it is a part. We cannot therefore read the riddle.'

He had been reading the eighth chapter of Romans, and said that he thought that St. Paul fully recognized in the sorrows of Nature and in the miseries of the world a stumbling-block to the divine idea of God, but that they are the preludes necessary as things are to the higher good. 'For myself,' he said, 'the world is the shadow of God.'

But if Tennyson saw and felt the difficulties, he was not blind to the danger of misinterpreting events which besets our limited intelligence and imperfect knowledge.

My father invariably believed that humility is the only true attitude of the human soul, and therefore spoke with the greatest reserve of what he called 'these unfathomable mysteries,' as befitting one who did not dogmatize, but who knew that the Finite can by no means grasp the Infinite: 'Dark is the world to thee, thyself is the reason why'; and yet he had a profound trust that when all is seen face to face, all will be seen as the best.[1]

The problems are always present, and sometimes almost overwhelm those who have hearts of pity. Lady Dilke says—

Manning's anguish at human suffering was developed in a degree that I have known in hardly any other man. I have heard him speak with a sound in his voice and a light in his eyes which meant depths of restrained passion. 'Give

[1] Tennyson's *Memoir*, by his Son, i. 313–7.

all yourself to London, it is the abomination of desolation.' 'No one knows the depth of the sufferings of women, save the doctor or the priest.'[1]

Any fruitful study of this subject must recognize that man's present powers and opportunities do not enable him to fathom the mystery. Bishop Butler saw this clearly. He describes the moral government of God as 'a scheme imperfectly comprehended.'

> The wisest and most knowing cannot comprehend the works of God, the methods and designs of His Providence in the creation and government of the world. . . . Creation is absolutely and entirely out of our depth, and beyond the extent of our utmost reach. . . . Every secret which is disclosed, every discovery which is made, every new effect which is brought to view, serves to convince us of numberless more which remain concealed, and which before we had no conception of.[2]

Though the study of human life teaches us something of 'the designs of Providence in the government of the world, enough to enforce upon us religion and the practice of virtue; yet, since the monarchy of the universe is a dominion unlimited in extent, and everlasting in duration, the general system of it must necessarily be quite beyond our comprehension.'[3]

In his *Analogy* Butler argues that our ignorance 'is really a satisfactory answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of God. . . . Those things which

[1] *Memoir of Lady Dilke*, p. 106.
[2] Sermon, *Upon the Ignorance of Man*, xv. p. 191.
[3] Ibid., p. 192.

are objected against the moral scheme of Providence may be, upon the whole, friendly and assistant to virtue, and productive of an overbalance of happiness.'[1]

Thus the scheme of Providence, the ways and works of God, are too vast, of too large extent, for our capacities. There is, as I may speak, such an expanse of power, and wisdom, and goodness, in the formation and government of the world, as is too much for us to take in, or comprehend. Power, and wisdom, and goodness, are manifest to us in all these works of God, which come within our view: but there are likewise infinite stores of each poured forth throughout the immensity of the creation; no part of which can be thoroughly understood, without taking in its reference and respect to the whole: and this is what we have not faculties for.[2]

Such considerations guard the Christian thinker against presumption in his judgements on Divine Providence. St. Paul closes his memorable review of these things with that wondering confession of ignorance: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?' (Rom. xi. 33–4).

Nor is it only that the subject is too vast for our comprehension. God may have reasons for concealing certain things from His creatures. The veil may be 'drawn over some scenes of infinite power, wisdom, and

[1] Part I. chap. vii. [2] Sermon, *Upon the Ignorance of Man*, § 7.

goodness, the sight of which might some way or other strike us too strongly.' There is a moral discipline in such concealment of the whole scheme. Patience thus has its perfect work. The very ignorance of deeper matters leads to the concentration of attention on personal conduct and character. God wishes to treat us as free creatures, and not to 'compel recognition of Himself by proofs which are logically and mathematically unassailable.'

What He desires is to win grateful love with voluntary homage from men who experience such effects of Redeeming Love on themselves that they cannot any longer doubt God on account of those mysteries of His sovereignty which they are unable to solve here below, so vast and wide is their experience of all that He gives them and of the possessions in which they feel themselves blest.[1]

One of the pressing problems of Providence is the existence of suffering. We have already discussed this in its bearings on Nature (p. 144). It is still more difficult to reconcile the existence of human pain with the divine goodness. Man has greater capacity for suffering, and in his case anticipation of coming trouble adds sensibly to his anguish. Here he pays the penalty of his higher organization.

Pain increases as Nature evolves. Nature evolves physically, and more highly organized animals feel more than the lower; it evolves to conscious reason, and man has deeper sorrows than the brute; it evolves socially, and

[1] Schmid, *Scientific Creed*, p. 175.

civilized man has more complex pains than the savage; it evolves spiritually, and the saint has agonies that the sensual or selfish man never knows.[1]

This is a law stamped on human nature. It is no variable accident, but part of the providential order. Darwin saw this when he said—

It has always appeared to me more satisfactory to look at the immense amount of pain and suffering in this world as the inevitable result of the natural sequence of events, i.e. general laws, rather than from the direct intervention of God, though I am aware this is not logical with reference to an Omniscient Deity.[2]

Pain is the spur to labour and to wise forethought. The pains of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and want 'work the organism.'[3] Without such incentives human energy and industry would stagnate. In another realm pain sets a barrier across paths that lead to disaster. The art of healing would lose its chief ally if disease were unattended by pain. It gives warning of the approach of some hidden mischief, and urges the sufferer to seek the remedy.

Painful sensations are only watchful videttes upon the outposts of our organism to warn us of approaching danger. Without these the citadel of our life would be quickly surprised and taken.[4]

[1] Simpson, *Review and Expositor*, January, 1907, p. 3.
[2] *Life and Letters*, iii. 64.
[3] Martineau *A Study of Religion*, ii. p. 76.
[4] Le Conte.

Mr. Peile, in his Bampton Lectures, says—

> Our first animal instinct is to regard pain, physical and moral, as wholly evil, as the one real evil, to be avoided at any cost; we shrink from it in ourselves with horror, in others with disgust.

But experience makes us 'ready to welcome pain in its salutary office of warning us off from the dangerous places of life.'

As we grow wiser we see that 'loss and suffering have a power which success and prosperity miss, a power to refine and strengthen the character; that the noblest work is done by sufferers, and through suffering; that pain is a condition of all true progress.'[1]

This is the way to the highest ends. 'The pleasures of each generation evaporate in air; it is their pains that increase the spiritual momentum of the world.'[2]

These considerations check any hasty judgement. Pervasive and increasing pain may be a witness to Providence, a sign that God will not be content unless His creatures are seeking to develop the highest possibilities of their nature. Human nature needs such discipline for its perfecting. Pain has certainly led both nations and churches as well as individuals to their greatest influence and usefulness. Israel's hard bondage in Egypt was a providential school which prepared the race for national greatness.

[1] *The Reproach of the Gospel*, pp. 64–5.
[2] *Lux Mundi*, 'The Problem of Pain,' p. 124.

The darker side of human experience thus bears witness to Divine Providence. Pain is the angel with the flaming sword.

The very risks to which human life is exposed in the attainment of its ends are providentially used to increase the care which is taken for its conditions, and to widen the range of that care, till it embraces the community as a whole. They constitute also a commanding summons to the energy by which evil is overcome.[1]

The conclusion which we reach is that criticisms of Divine Providence based on the existence of human suffering are short-sighted. They fasten attention on things which arouse our pity, but they ignore the higher interests of humanity, which are served in a multitude of ways by what is often very hard to bear.

From a general survey of the whole difficulty, it would appear, therefore, that the dilemma that God is either not beneficent or not omnipotent is entirely inconclusive. It is the existence of pain, and of all that centres in pain, that is held to force upon us this alternative. Yet it is clear that, taken on the whole, pain is advantageous, especially judged from the standpoint of the higher interests of the world. In so far as this may be presumed, the existence of pain cannot be used either as an argument against the beneficence of God or His omnipotence.[2]

The moral and spiritual benefits derived from pain must not be overlooked. It enriches character. It opens springs of tenderness in rocky natures, it reveals

[1] Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*, p. 397.
[2] Ibid., p. 400.

heavenly things to minds dazzled by the vain glories of the world.

> It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
> That I might learn Thy statutes (Ps. cxix. 71),

is an experience to which multitudes have borne witness. Christian character gains rich blessing through sorrow.

> Hours spent with pain and Thee
> Lost hours have never seemed.

Those who have endured the severest testing have been most eager to acknowledge that Divine Providence had dealt graciously with them, and had led them to results which would have been unattained save for the baptism of sorrow.

The pains of martyrs, or the losses of self-sacrificing devotion, are never classed among the evil things of the world. They are its bright places rather, the culminating points at which humanity has displayed its true glory, and reached its perfect level. An irrepressible pride and gladness are the feelings they elicit: a pride which no regret can drown, a gladness no indignation overpower.[1]

Pater has the same thought. He speaks of those noble men and women who amid entangling conditions 'work out for themselves a supreme *dénouement*. . . . Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstance which endows one at the end with those great experiences?'[2]

George Meredith's great apothegm, 'There is nothing

[1] Hinton, *The Mystery of Pain*, p. 12.

[2] *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p. 245.

the body suffers that the soul may not profit by,' is true here. Mr. Simpson, in the paper from which we have already quoted, draws a striking illustration from the 'months of distress' which broke down Mr. Gladstone's strength. 'His biographer, not unnaturally, called a great Christian's sufferings "cruel"; but Mr. Gladstone himself died singing praise of Him who is "most sure in all His ways."' The statesman's eye was fixed on the goal towards which he was being led. It was the providential path to the beatific vision.

Pain is never a welcome guest; but it is fighting our battles, and we fail when we shrink 'from the stern alliance.' Its presence in human life 'is eminently useful, and therefore consistent with providential and beneficent design.'[1] We may easily take a pessimistic view of human suffering, and there are moments when to rise above that spirit is a veritable triumph. Yet in hours that are more serene we may see that pain has its limits.

> All this dark bulk of misery is divided and subdivided amongst countless individuals. Each takes his little bit of pain and bears it in his corner. Moving amongst all this army of darkness, though unseen by us, is another army of light, of love, of courage.[2]

John Stuart Mill maintained in his *Essay on Religion* that if God were omnipotent the just law would be that 'each person's share of suffering and

[1] *Lux Mundi*, p. 119.
[2] Le Gallienne, *Religion of a Literary Man*, p. 27.

happiness would be exactly proportioned to good or evil deeds, and no human being would have a worse lot than another without worse deserts.'

We quite agree with an accomplished critic, who says: 'This is a strange and difficult world of ours; but after all, I am thankful I live in it rather than in the world Mill would have made in the name of justice.'[1]

Edward Payson held that many providential afflictions, whatever other reasons exist for them, are designed to keep the springs of human sympathy running. Affliction in a home softens character and forges new links between the strong and the feeble. Sir Leslie Stephen, in a time of great sorrow, wrote to Mr. Lowell—

> Grief like mine has only this one advantage, that it makes old friends dearer. As for Providence, I don't call people foolish—as you accuse me of doing—for believing in it, till they make a Providence of their own; and a very disagreeable kind of being it often is. I am content to take things as they come, and fight it out as well as I can.

That moral discipline reveals the hand of Providence. York Powell, in speaking of his friend Vigfuson's death, writes to W. P. Ker: 'He said one day, "Life would be a very poor thin thing without sorrow," and it is true.'[2] When Mr. W. T. Arnold was dying, 'sympathetic murmurs now and then seemed to give glimpses into depths we could not reach. "God only knows

[1] Simpson, *Review and Expositor*, January, 1907.
[2] *Life*, i. 97, February 2, 1889.

what I have suffered." "It's all love." "God is *the strong power*"; and, scarcely breathed, on the last day before his death, "I love God"; . . . "I love God!"'[1]

On the wider scale great disasters have brought out much that was good in human nature. Hurricanes, earthquakes, epidemics have knit nations and communities together. This justifies the verdict that 'the dispensations of Providence may take the form of natural calamities.'[2] Murmuring is rebuked and cast out in view of such issues.

> Our rights! our grievances . . . against God. When we have given due thanks for our mercies: for the mere sky and sunshine, for the wonder of love, for the miracle of beauty, for the humblest joys of sensation, then it will be time to talk about those.[3]

Moral evil is a harder problem to explain than that of pain. For this the God of Providence cannot be held accountable. The wrong done to the innocent and helpless, the woes endured by little children, all cry out for explanation. Such things almost make us doubt whether there is any Divine Providence. The key to this mystery lies in human freedom. That necessarily implies freedom to will evil. Where man sinks below his true nature he follows evil; but the indwelling Spirit of God is given to convict him of sin and wrong, to lead him to renounce it, and follow after good.

[1] *William Thomas Arnold*, pp. 121–2.
[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, ii. 265.
[3] Le Gallienne, *Religion of a Literary Man*, p. 42.

Under such guidance it is not too much to expect that evil may be cast out of human lives.[1] Evil exists in myriad forms as we know by terrible experience, but in the Atonement of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit God has prepared the means of deliverance and victory. Divine Providence is responsible for the gift of freedom, but not for the abuse of it from which evil springs. God preferred to have a moral universe rather than have no free moral universe at all.

And since the idea of moral beings includes their freedom, Omnipotence itself could no more make moral beings without freedom than a square without sides. It would not be a difficulty, but a contradiction in terms.[2]

Much criticism of Divine Providence overlooks the fact that the very conception of it involves patience. Its purposes require space and time for their unfolding. We see the beginning of some great scheme, others will see its issue. William Morgan, the young Irishman who led the Wesleys to visit the sick and the prisoners at Oxford, died in 1732, but he had set his friends on a road which they followed for more than half a century, and which Methodism still delights to follow.

Providence, then, must not be measured by lifetimes. Delays are hard to understand in the midst of our fight against sin and wrong. It is not easy to be patient when Heaven seems dumb and inactive. Should

[1] See Watson's *Philosophical Basis of Religion*, pp. 459–62.

[2] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 77. See also Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 135.

not Divine Omnipotence make haste to win the victory? Mr. Froude says that Carlyle's faith in the existence, the omnipresence, the omnipotence of God remained unshaken to the end of his life, 'yet he was perplexed by the indifference with which the Supreme Power was allowing its existence to be obscured. I once said to him, not long before his death, that I could only believe in a God which *did* something. With a cry of pain, which I shall never forget, he said, "He does nothing."'[1]

Strange blindness must have fallen on the two historians in that hour. Both Nature and history are a living, growing commentary on our Lord's word, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work' (John v. 17). If God stands in the background allowing man the glory and joy of service, that must not obscure the fact that His providence is always at work in the world. Walt Whitman was wiser than Carlyle when he wrote those lines 'after reading Hegel'—

Roaming in thought over the universe, I saw the little that is Good steadily hastening towards its immortality,
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge itself to become lost and dead.

That nobler spirit is growing.

A number of unworthy beliefs about God are being tacitly dropped, and they are so treated because they are unworthy of Him. The realm of Nature is being claimed for Him once more; the distinction between natural and

[1] *Thomas Carlyle in London*, ii. 260.

supernatural is repudiated; we hear less frequently complaints that God 'does nothing,' because He does not assert Himself by breaking one of His own laws.[1]

An old Methodist saint, Thomas Robinson Allan, heard Thomas Binney in 1852, when he was in much perplexity. The preacher said—

> Everything is in the control of God, who in His own time will interpose. But His Providence often takes a wide sweep, and to our limited minds seems to be delayed. Nevertheless, God is always working, and that on the side of truth and right, and His people can well afford to wait.[2]

Our judgements on Providence change as we wait and work. Waiting is a great test of faith, but it pays. As Dr. John Ker put it, 'Let God in His Providence finish His sentences, and do not interrupt Him at every word.' We have all had to reverse our verdicts on Providence. God was wiser and more gracious than we had dreamed. It is no small comfort to feel that this is true in small matters. It suggests that it may be so in great things also. 'It is very little that we can ever know of the ways of Providence or the laws of existence; but that little is enough, and more than enough.'[3]

If this reversal of judgement takes place in a lifetime, how greatly may the verdicts of future generations be modified by events that lie outside our vision!

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1908, pp. 103–4.
[2] *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1887, p. 608.
[3] Ruskin.

When the light shines, and we know as also we are known, we may expect to gain still more wonderful insight into the ways of God.

Guizot, in a luminous chapter on civilization, discerns progress and advance everywhere.

If we now examine the history of the world we shall have the same result. We shall find that every expansion of human intelligence has proved of advantage to society; and that all the great advances in the social condition have turned to the profit of humanity. One or other of these facts may predominate, may shine forth with greater splendour for a season, and impress upon the movement its own peculiar character. At times it may not be till after a long interval, after a thousand transformations, a thousand obstacles, that the second shows itself, and comes, as it were, to complete the civilization which the first had begun; but when we look closely we easily recognize the link by which they are connected. The movements of Providence are not restricted to narrow bounds; it is not anxious to deduce to-day the consequence of the premisses it laid down yesterday. It may defer this for ages, till the fullness of time shall come. Its logic will not be less conclusive for reasoning slowly. Providence moves through time, as the gods of Homer through space—it makes a step and ages have rolled away. How long a time, how many circumstances intervened, before the regeneration of the moral powers of man, by Christianity, exercised its great, its legitimate influence upon his social condition? Yet who can doubt or mistake its power?[1]

That prospect must always be before our eyes. We shall not find it easy to bear the harsh judgements

[1] Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe*, pp. 17–18.

passed on God's ways. When hard words were spoken about religion, R. H. Hutton tells Dr. Brown—

> I feel dumb when my heart is hot within me, and can only sometimes call upon Christ to vindicate His own reality instead of getting wretched little litterateurs like me to speak for Him. 'Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence,' is the inexpressibly strong feeling with which I always begin my painful work on subjects that one word from God Himself would render so inexpressibly insignificant and meaningless. But so I suppose it is always to be in the world.[1]

We anticipate joyfully that word from God. It is promised, but we shall have to wait for it. Meanwhile faith rests amid all perplexities and mysteries on the assurance that Divine Providence is moved by the highest wisdom and goodness, and is leading all who accept its guidance to a goal where they shall understand how all things have indeed worked together for good.

[1] *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, p. 347.

XV

THE PART ASSIGNED TO HUMAN PROVIDENCE

For one cannot proceed one step in reasoning upon natural religion, any more than upon Christianity, without laying it down as a first principle that the dispensations of Providence are not to be judged of by their perversions, but by their genuine tendencies; not by what they do actually seem to effect, but by what they would effect if mankind did their part; that part which is justly put and laid upon them.—BUTLER, *Analogy*, Part II. chap. i.

Find out the plan of God in your generation; and then beware lest you cross that plan, or fail to find your own place in it.—PRINCE ALBERT'S MAXIM.

> On him, their second Providence, they hung,
> Their law his eye, their oracle his tongue.
>
> POPE, *Essay on Man*, ii. 217-8.

Listen to this from Bacon: 'It is a heaven upon earth when a man's mind rests upon Providence, moves in Charity, and turns upon the poles of Truth.' Of the Essays he said: 'There is more wisdom compressed into that small volume than into any other book of the same size that I know.'—TENNYSON'S *Life*, ii. 415.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Human Providence responsible for many evils 321
It must be educated for its part 321
Mill's objection answered by Dr. Wallace 322
A great field here 323
Influence of one wise ally of Divine Providence 324
A Kempis on individual responsibility 325
Maurice on the duty of the Churches 325
The world as an ally of man 327
The Jewish Church deposed from its place 328
Nations and social movements 329
Wise methods essential 329
Some things to strive for 330
Efforts for the criminal classes 331
Fruitful rescue work 332
Medicine and surgery as a sphere of Human Providence . . 333
Man responsible for much misery in the animal world . . 335
Human tyranny and war 336
Singleness of purpose needed 336
What Human Providence might have done 338
Its boundless opportunity 339
Society an instrument for God's purposes 340
The victory sure if the right road taken 341
Partnership in Providence an inspiration 341

LITERATURE

A. R. Wallace, *My Life;* Wrixon, *The Pattern Nation;* Pearson, *National Life and Character;* Anderson, *Crime and Criminals;* M'Cosh, *The Method of the Divine Government;* Lankester, *The Kingdom of Man;* Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times,* xiii.; Huntington, *Human Society;* Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis;* Peile, *The Reproach of the Gospel;* Nicholas, *Christianity and Socialism;* *The Citizen of To-morrow;* Keeble, *Industrial Day Dreams;* Loane, *From their Point of View,*

XV

THE hasty and ill-considered judgements on Divine Providence which we have passed in review suggest that the attack must be taken into another quarter. It is Human Providence that we have to arraign. There are, no doubt, evils and sorrows which have their root in the constitution of man. We see no means by which disease and death can be eradicated, however much they may be shorn of terrors, till the present Providential Order gives place to that new dispensation in which there is no more death, no tears, no pain. For that the whole creation longs and prays.

Meanwhile man's side is at fault. We are allies of Divine Providence, and can in no small measure help or hinder its purposes. Our misreading of God's ways, and of our own nature, our misconception of duty, our selfishness and blindness, all mar the result. Man must be educated to fulfil his task as a partner with Divine Providence. Dr. A. R. Wallace once dined with John Stuart Mill.

> The conversation turned somehow upon the existence and nature of God. Mr. Grote [the historian] seemed inclined

to accept the ordinary view of an eternal, omniscient, and benevolent existence, because everything else was almost unthinkable. To which Mill replied, that whoever considered the folly, misery, and badness of the bulk of mankind, such a belief was unthinkable, because it would imply that God *could* have made man good and happy, have abolished evil, and has not done so. I ventured to suggest that what we call evil may be essential to the ultimate development of the highest good for all; but he would not listen to it or argue the question at all, but repeated, dogmatically, that an omnipotent God might have made man wise, good, and happy, and as He had not chosen to do so it was absurd for us to believe in such a being and call Him almighty and good.[1]

Mr. Wallace was not convinced by these assertions. He saw that man was at fault. He refers to Robert Owen's training of children at New Lanark.

None were found to be incorrigible, *none* beyond control, *none* who did not respond to the love and sympathetic instruction of their teachers. It is therefore quite possible that *all* the evil in the world is directly due to man, not to God; and that when we once realize this to its full extent we shall be able, not only to eliminate almost completely what we now term evil, but shall then clearly perceive that all these propensities and passions that under bad conditions of society inevitably lead to it, will under good conditions add to the variety and the capacities of human nature, the enjoyment of life by all, and at the same time greatly increase the possibilities of development of the whole race. I myself feel confident that this is really the case, and that such considerations, when followed out to their ultimate

[1] See this subject treated in Chapter V.

issues, afford a complete solution of the great problem of the ages—'the origin of evil.'[1]

The possibilities of wise and patient work in this field of Human Providence are astonishing. Man's will and way must be brought into harmony with the purposes of Divine Providence. He must be quick to make experiments, and must bend his energies to secure favourable conditions for carrying them out. The gardener seeks the situation and the soil which will bring flower and fruit to perfection. If he is not at first successful, he transplants his flower or sapling and helps it to put forth all its energies. Experiments in human nature are more critical, but the results are even more wonderful. The child from the gutter is given a new chance in our colonies, and grows into a strong, self-respecting worker. We sometimes have to take bold steps, as Wesley did when he left his Oxford quiet to labour in Georgia and to become the Evangelist of England. Such ventures can only be made with an eye fixed on God and a heart waiting on Him for guidance.

John Stuart Mill argued that there was

a radical absurdity in attempts to discover, in detail, what are the designs of Providence, in order when they are discovered to help Providence in bringing them about. Those who argue, from particular indications, that Providence intends this or that, either believe that the Creator can do all that he will or that he cannot. If the first

[1] *My Life*, vol. ii. 237–8.

supposition is adopted—if Providence is omnipotent, Providence intends whatever happens, and the fact of its happening proves that Providence intended it. If so, everything which a human being can do is predestined by Providence and is a fulfilment of its designs.[1]

This reasoning, however, ignores the possibility that God has arranged a world where Human Providence may have its share in the uplifting of the race. There is everything to encourage bold and well-considered action.

The greatest changes of which we have had experience as yet are due to our increasing knowledge of history and nature. They have been produced by a few minds appearing in three or four favoured nations, in comparatively a short period of time. May we be allowed to imagine the minds of men everywhere working together during many ages for the completion of our knowledge? May not the increase of knowledge transfigure the world?[2]

It is not easy to exaggerate the influence which a single enlightened individual may exert as an ally of Divine Providence. Dr. Arnold's work at Rugby changed the aspect of English education. Every wise teacher has a noble field. He must be awake to the possibilities of individual character and capacity. The child's mind must not be forced into the master's or parent's groove. Providence may have chosen quite a different mould for it. Each nature must have room

[1] Mill, *Nature, &c.*, p. 55.
[2] Jowett's *Plato*, i. 414.

to expand in its own way. Its capacity must be recognized, and it must be helped to find itself and develop its powers. The openings before the master of a household or of a business are scarcely less significant.

A double danger besets Human Providence. It may do too much, or it may do too little. It may be listless, or it may become impatient and self-willed. It is not easy to avoid these dangers. Individual responsibility must be developed, and a wise interest taken in the affairs of others. A recent biographer of Thomas à Kempis says he knew that the great decisions of life depend upon the individual, and that a profound sense of individual responsibility is the basis of all ethical, all spiritual progress. And yet 'he is in fact a Socialist, rather than an Individualist. He preaches from end to end of his work the most practical form of altruism: *Si portari vis, porta et alium*—If thou wilt be carried, carry also another. The whole duty of human altruism, the whole doctrine of human solidarity, is contained in this and other pregnant phrases.'[1]

F. D. Maurice saw that Human Providence must be practical, must be awake to the needs of society and devote all its strength to the conflict with sin and wrong. He 'lived in those exalted regions where God and His enemies wrestled for the bodies and the souls of men.'

[1] Montmorency, *Thomas à Kempis*, pp. 265–7.

He saw the Churches, with their stiff, formal traditions, sharply divided from the life of the ever-passing crowd. He found their energies pent up into services one day in seven, and emphasizing only the more obvious sins of the flesh as being the essence of all evil. He demanded that they should come out into the streets and into the daylight, in a new crusade for the transfiguration of the whole of modern society, in the light of the great illumination of the end. 'I am sure,' he maintained, 'that if the gospel is not regarded as a message to all mankind of the redemption which God has effected in His Son; if the Bible is thought to be speaking only of a world to come, and not of a Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace and Truth with which we may be in conformity or in enmity now; if the Church is not felt to be the hallower of all professions and occupations, the bond of all classes, the instrument of reforming abuses, the admonisher of the rich, the friend of the poor, the asserter of the glory of that humanity which Christ bears—*we* are to blame, and God will call us to account as unfaithful stewards of His treasure.'[1]

The Churches have learned that lesson, and are busy with tasks which were once regarded as quite outside their province. Our great Central Missions have nobly led the way in this extension of influence and service. Human Providence is thus enlarging its sphere with the happiest results. It is becoming clearer that the moral forces latent in Christianity may be concentrated on that progressive regeneration of social and public life on which the prophets of Israel set their hearts, and which Jesus Christ came to fulfil. The isolated efforts of the past are being

[1] Masterman's *F. D. Maurice*, pp. 142–3.

followed by a mobilization of resources from which it is legitimate to expect notable results.[1]

Human Providence, then, is assigned no mean share in the renewing of the world. Its success in its vast task will depend on the measure in which it regards itself as responsible to Divine Providence and as an integral part of the world for whose transformation it is to labour. George Herbert dwells with much quaint illustration on man's relation to the earth and heaven, where 'each thing is full of dutie' to its human master. That is his lever for working out the purposes of God. He is so identified with the world that his opportunity of labouring for its good is unbounded.

> More servants wait on Man
> Than he'll take notice of: in ev'ry path
> He treads down that which doth befriend him
> When sicknesse makes him pale and wan.
> Oh mightie love! Man is one world, and hath
> Another to attend him.
>
> Since then, my God, Thou hast
> So brave a palace built, O dwell in it,
> That it may dwell with Thee at last!
> Till then afford us so much wit,
> That, as the world serves us, we may serve Thee,
> And both Thy servants be.[2]

For Human Providence to hold back from its work is disloyalty to its divine partner. One national story is full of warning here. The history of Israel shows

[1] See Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, chap. vii.
[2] *The Temple*, § 64, 'Man.'

what pains God took to train His helpers and how blind they were to His purpose. Philo calls the Jewish people the priests and prophets for all mankind, and asks why they do not seek to confer the benefit of a happier and better life on all.[1] God sought to raise the chosen race to the height of their providential vocation, but they took a narrow view of their privilege and duty. Their honour and prosperity, their richer measure of truth, were occasions for pride and self-glorification rather than calls to consecration. The most terrible indictment ever brought against a people who had forsaken the providential path, was wrung from the broken-hearted Apostle in his Epistle to the Thessalonians. 'The Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave out us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men' (1 Thess. ii. 14, 15).

There is no mightier antidote to pride and selfishness than to watch how such instruments are laid aside and others chosen. The Jewish Church has long lost its premier place as the ally of Divine Providence. It gave the world the Old Testament and prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. But it refused to work on God's lines. It became a hinderer of Providence, and the curtain falls on priests and scribes fighting against God.'

These thoughts apply with much force to the national life of to-day. The problem of rendering each

[1] Neander, *Church History*, i. 70.

nation the most efficient instrument of Divine Providence is beset with difficulties. Canning once said, 'Time and chance can do nothing for those who will do nothing for themselves. Providence itself can scarcely save a people who are not prepared to make a struggle for their safety.' Our civilization carries a problem in its bosom as to the relations of rich and poor which is only partially understood. This is somewhat 'disguised by the many noble aspirations, and bright forecasts for a happy future social life for men, which accompany it; and by ardent schemes for higher methods of industrial life, which all good men would rejoice to see realized.'[1]

Christian thinkers sympathize profoundly with every wise endeavour to promote the general well-being. The social movements of our time may be regarded as allies of Divine Providence. Nations never had so manifest a call and opportunity in this direction as to-day. A wise policy in regard to the housing of the poor, sanitation, temperance, the education and training of the young, will do much to elevate the submerged masses. It is no easy thing to shape national schemes of reform on lines which time and experience will approve. A true worker for the people uttered this warning—

> He who goes about the world-school, simply trying to stanch the tears of those who cry, without examining why the Master lets them work in tears; he who wanders hither

[1] Wrixon, *The Pattern Nation*, pp. 9–10.

and thither crying out on the Providence that allows men to be wounded in the world-battle, without inquiring whether they brought it on themselves; he who, in short, tries to be more merciful than God—may think himself a charitable man, but may chance to earn the name of meddling fool.[1]

A significant comment on that sentence is made by a devoted worker among the poor.

I once heard a clergyman say what the actions of many people declare with equal plainness: 'I am weary of all this cant about "deserving cases." Surely it is more Christ-like to help the undeserving!' He coolly took for granted the fact that we *can* help them, while practical people know how hard it is to assist even the most deserving without ultimately producing more harm than good.[2]

The need of caution is evident. Yet Human Providence is bound to bestir itself. The difficulties which beset the path only make our duty more manifest. Many baffle our attempts to raise them in the scale of living by their drunken habits, their lack of self-respect and industry; but the task cannot be regarded as hopeless by those who believe in divine grace and its power to uplift the lowest. Meanwhile we have our clear duty. It is thus set forth by one who felt the burden borne by many to be intolerable.

Is it too much to say that, in the general interest, separation of the sexes in homes might be insisted on, with the result that, instead of families living in a single room,

[1] Lambert's *Sermons on Pauperism*, p. 46.
[2] Miss Loane, *The Next Street but One*, p. 147.

there should be three bedrooms at least to every married man's domicile? Ought not the average of wages to be such, that every able-bodied man could bring up his family in a house good enough to maintain the body at its highest efficiency, and at the same time to make a provision against sickness and old age? Is it not for the interest of the State that every child should be well taught, that the most capable should be able to rise out of the ranks, and that all should have a little sunshine, some respite from toil during their early years?[1]

No difficulties must daunt us from undertaking our task. It is the plain business of a nation to secure the best training for its youth, and to act as human providence for the poor and unfortunate who are unfitted for the struggle of life. The criminal classes form another heavy burden. John Howard awoke the conscience of Europe in this respect. Elizabeth Fry brought a breath of health and Christian purity into Newgate. Since their days many lessons have been learned. The herding of prisoners, with its horrible contamination of first offenders, is now impossible.

If we go back a single generation, our prisons were so administered that a term of imprisonment was an adequate training for a criminal career; and the prisoner on his discharge, finding no one to give him a helping hand, was all too likely to turn to crime. But to-day prisons are no longer nurseries of crime; and the development of practical philanthropy makes it possible for every offender, on leaving prison, to return to honest labour.[2]

[1] Pearson, *National Life and Character*, pp. 127–8.

[2] Sir R. Anderson, *Crime and Criminals*, pp. 10–11.

We have much still to learn as to the art of renewing and saving the fallen. It is one thing to punish; it is another to awaken desire after a better life and guide the halting steps along that toilsome road. Those who bend their strength to such tasks will learn from the problems that beset Human Providence how hard are the tasks of Divine Providence. Their lips will utter no harsh or hasty judgement on the Power that governs the world. Efforts to raise the fallen and strengthen feeble wills need singular wisdom. The humblest work must be on right lines, and must support and supplement schemes which take a wider range. There is a right method of doing these lesser tasks of Human Providence, and it is essential to follow it. Those who do so will discover undreamt-of forces which are their strong allies in every good work.

It will be found, too, that every effectual means of reclaiming the abandoned and the outcast must contain within it a method of bringing the parties anew under the power of those supports which Providence affords to the continuance in virtue. . . . In order to secure the co-operation of Providence we must adopt the system of Providence, and place the parties under its influence. Without this, all mere secular means will be found utterly useless in elevating human character to a higher level. Human wisdom is at its highest exercise when it is observing the superiority of divine wisdom, and following its method of procedure.[1]

[1] M'Cosh, *Method of the Divine Government*, p. 241.

One instance of fruitful rescue work may be mentioned. Dr. A. R. Wallace was greatly impressed by a story which the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes told him at Davos in 1896. A female prisoner who had reached the depths of drunkenness and vice became so violent that it was dangerous to approach her. One of Mr. Hughes' rescue workers asked to be allowed to go to her cell and receive her on her discharge. She was told it was unsafe, and when she persisted, several of the strongest female warders went to protect her. The lady opened her arms and kissed the prisoner, who was melted down by this treatment and burst into tears. She became one of the most useful and earnest helpers in the rescue home.

This woman had not, for years, received a single word of real sympathy or love. A similar marvellous effect was produced by Mrs. Fry on the female prisoners in Newgate by her intense sympathy and affection for them; yet we still go on with our crude, harsh system of prison discipline, which inevitably degrades and brutalizes the great majority of those subject to it. And we dare call ourselves enlightened, humane, civilized, and even Christians.[1]

The progress made by medicine and surgery in the relief of suffering during the last half-century furnishes a memorable example of the achievements possible to Human Providence. No similar period in history has seen such increase in our knowledge of the causes of

[1] *My Life*, ii. 217–8. See a still more remarkable story in *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia*, p. 166.

disease and the means by which it may be met and conquered. A notable lengthening of life has already been secured, and more wonderful developments are in store. It is becoming clear that infectious diseases may be almost stamped out, and mortality among children greatly reduced. Thousands of lives have already been saved by antiseptic surgery. Science is manifestly alive to her part in the scheme of human providence. 'Malta fever,' which had long been endemic in that island, has been practically extinguished; and the 'sleeping sickness,' which attacks white men as well as natives, and threatens to spread along the Nile Valley, is being studied with good hope of similar results.[1] Sir Lauder Brunton says—

> Very few discoveries have had such important bearings upon the possibilities of life in the tropics as that of the definite proof of the part played by mosquitoes in the transmission of disease. Already the discovery has saved very many lives, and rendered residence in malarial districts almost free from danger when certain precautions are adopted.[2]

Yellow fever has been almost stamped out in some districts of the Southern States of America by destroying mosquitoes in the same way as is done in fighting malaria. If 'ignorance and apathy' were overcome, wonderful results would follow. West Africa may become one of the healthiest parts of the empire if our

[1] Lankester, *The Kingdom of Man*, chap. iii.
[2] *Times*, October 22, 1907.

knowledge of tropical medicine goes on improving as it has done during the last few years. Discouragements may be turned to rich account in this war.

Every jet of chaos which threatens to overwhelm us is convertible by intellect into wholesome force. Fate is unpenetrated causes. The water drowns ship and sailor, like a grain of dust. But learn to swim, trim your barque, and the wave which drowned it will be cloven by it, and carry it, like its own foam, a plume and a power. The annual slaughter from typhus far exceeds that of war; but right drainage destroys typhus.[1]

Professor Ray Lankester shows how much the domestic animals are affected by the rule of man in the diseases to which they are subject.

It seems to be a legitimate view that every disease to which animals (and probably plants also) are liable, except as a transient and very exceptionable occurrence, is due to man's interference. The diseases of cattle, sheep, pigs, and horses, are not known except in domesticated herds and those wild creatures to which man's domesticated productions have communicated them.[2]

Man is thus responsible for much misery in that world over which God has given him such ample control. It is his plain duty to see that all avoidable disease and hardship are removed. Where one man of first-rate intelligence is employed in detecting 'disease-producing parasites, their special conditions of life and the way to bring them to an end, there should be a thousand.'[3]

[1] Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*: 'Fate.'
[2] *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 33. [3] Ibid., p. 36.

To play the part of minor Providence wisely will tax man's resources, but it will bring a vast increase of happiness and well-being into the kingdom over which Divine Providence has given him rule.

In other fields there is much to learn. Man's tyranny over man is the theme of some of the blackest pages of history. The horrible story of slavery and the history of wars of extermination and conquest make us shudder at the callousness of human nature. The world has had no scourge like that which man has endured from man.

If the earthquake and the storm have slain their thousands, these rebellious passions have slain their tens of thousands. By far the largest part of human misery is the work of human impatience and discontent.

Charles Kingsley bewailed the waste of life in the Crimean war.

Oh, consider how precious is one man; consider how much good the weakest and stupidest of us all might do if he set himself with his whole soul to do good; consider that the weakest and stupidest of us, even if he has no care for good, cannot earn his day's wages without doing some good to the bodies of his fellow men; and then judge of the loss to mankind by this one single siege of one single town [Sebastopol].[2]

The duties set before Human Providence call for singleness of aim and purity of motive. Self-seeking,

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i. 130.
[2] *Sermons for the Times*, p. 212.

as every day's experience of social and municipal affairs bears witness, will effectually destroy usefulness. Our Lord's words have abiding and growing significance: 'No man can serve two masters' (Matt. vi. 24). Every partner of Divine Providence must bring this test to bear on his own character and motives. It is only when we are ready to make sacrifice for God and others that we can be used for the highest ends. The law of vicarious sacrifice holds right through the realm of Human Providence. The very fact that vested interests of every kind stand in the way of progress and reform is significant. The only safety for true and brave men is in singleness of aim.

Do you seek first God's kingdom, or your own profit, your own pleasure, your own reputation? Do you believe that you are in God's kingdom, that He is your King, and has called you to the station in which you are to do good and useful work for Him upon this earth of His? Whatever be your calling, whether you be servant, labourer, farmer, tradesman, gentleman, maid, wife, or widow, father, son, or husband, do you ask yourself every day, 'Now what are the laws of God's kingdom about this station of mine? What is my duty here? How can I obey God, and His laws here, and do what He requires of me, and so be a good servant, a good labourer, a good tradesman, a good master, a good parish officer, a good wife, a good parent, pleasing to God, useful to my neighbours and to my countrymen?' Or do you say to yourselves, 'How can I get the greatest quantity of money and pleasure out of my station, with the least trouble to myself?'[1]

[1] Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, xiii., on Providence, p. 218.

The providence of God grows more wonderful as we study it. Its plans are conceived with a wisdom and a beneficence that are far above human thought; they are carried out with a power and a patience that can only be described as divine. As these marvels are better understood, Human Providence will appreciate more highly the greatness of the partnership to which it is invited. When the glorious truth of Divine Providence is grasped and reproduced in a thousand minor forms as the Providence of a home, a church, a kingdom, a new era will dawn in the life of the family, the Christian society, and the world. If the Human Providence had always been awake to its responsibilities and wise in facing them, many a page of social and national history would have been altogether different. If as Divine Providence unfolded its plans its earthly partners had been ready to carry them out, a thousand evils would have been averted and a thousand blessings gained for man. War would have ceased, and nations would have learned to seek each other's blessing and prosperity. Towards that end God is leading the world.

The Almighty Providence which never sleeps draws His children on; and when He draws, it is no aimless movement. We see but the surface, or only margins and glimpses of the mighty plan. The world is not a self-impelled caprice. History is not a tangled skein.[1]

[1] Huntington, *Human Society: its Providential Structure, &c.*, pp. 193–5.

Providence makes constant and growing calls upon us. 'God is a good worker, but He loves to be helped.' We need also that divine discontent which is always bent on improvement. Much has been done, but far more waits and presses for accomplishment. 'If there is one sin in the present state of evolution it is contentment. No human being can afford to be contented; if he be so, his sin will surely track him down.'[1]

Dr. A. R. Wallace is very severe. He says—

> As compared with our astounding progress in physical science and its practical applications, our system of government, of administrative justice and of national education, and our entire social and moral organization, remain in a state of barbarism.

Here, then, is the boundless field of labour assigned to Human Providence. What can we count on God to do? How can we make ourselves most effective as workers together with Him? Those are great questions, and our Lord has answered them. He tells us in the Sermon on the Mount 'why we are to work, and to look forward, and to believe that God will bless our labour. And what is this reason? It is this, that we have a Father in heaven; not a mere Maker, not a mere Master, but a Father. All turns on that one gospel of all gospels, your Father in heaven.'[2]

When Human Providence shapes its whole course

[1] Jackson's *Bernard Shaw*, p. 212.
[2] Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 205.

in harmony with that double truth—the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, it will put forth its full strength to accomplish its growing tasks. There are dangers ahead which may thus be averted. Whether there is to be a 'yellow peril' in the Far East depends on how far we can leaven Japan and China with the Spirit of Christ and make them and ourselves obedient to the Golden Rule. The wealth of the world is inexhaustible; and if all men labour together to develop it every nation will be enriched.

If it were not that men do not seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, there would be no end, no bound to the wealth, the comfort, the happiness of all the children of men. Even as it is, in spite of all man's sin, the world does prosper, marvellously, miraculously;—in spite of all the waste, destruction, idleness, ignorance, injustice, and folly which goes on in the world, mankind increases and replenishes the earth, and improves in comfort and happiness;—in spite of all, God is stronger than the devil, life stronger than death, wisdom stronger than folly, order stronger than disorder, fruitfulness stronger than destruction, and they will be so, more and more, till the last great day, when Christ shall have put all enemies under His feet, and death is swallowed up in victory, and all mankind is one fold[1] under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the righteous King of all.[2]

Human society has been described as 'a living instrument of Divine Thought.'[3] All its parts are dependent on each other and intended to support and

[1] R.V. 'flock.' [2] Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 208.
[3] Huntington, *Human Society*, p. 34.

perfect each other. Society may accomplish tasks which the individual cannot perform. Intemperance, crime, poverty, ignorance may thus be grappled with and overcome. The world is waking up to the possibilities of united action, and so are the Churches. There is no task set by Divine Providence which its human partners may not accomplish through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The victory on which our hearts are set may not be reached in our lifetime, but it will be brought nearer by every act of fidelity and self-sacrifice, and it will surely come. There is only one road. John Ruskin has marked it out.

> The real history of mankind is that of the slow advance of resolved deed following laboriously just thought ; and all the greatest men live in their purpose and effort more than it is possible for them to live in reality. The things that actually happened were of small consequence—the thoughts that were developed are of infinite consequence.

The thought of partnership in Providence is an inspiration to the patient and teachable. God allows us a share in His designs for the blessing of the world. He even sets the system of natural law at our service that our engineers and men of science may employ it in a thousand ways to promote the general good. The laws of gravity, the forces of steam and electricity, the varieties of climate, man is able to press them all into his service.[1] Our best strength must be put into

[1] See O. D. Watkins, *The Divine Providence*, p. 126.

the work that falls to us. We shall reap as we sow. Providence deals with our human contributions to the general scheme for the well-being of the world, as the earth deals with the grain from which springs the golden harvest. It becomes increasingly evident as we watch the signs of the times that Divine Providence will not fail in its glorious enterprise for the salvation of the whole human race, and each one of its humble, true-hearted partners shall have his rich share in the honour and blessing of the accomplished work.

INDEX

Abraham, 28, 159
Acton, Lord, 118, 133, 157, 178, 183, 198, 209, 288
Aeschylus, 61
Agassiz, 127
Alfred, King, 85
Allan, T. R., 316
Ambrose, St., 13, 119
America, 174–5
Anaxagoras, 59
Anglo-Saxon leaven, 174; missions, 242
Animals and Man, 335
Aquinas, Thomas, 87
Aristotle, 61
Arnold, Dr., 149, 164, 180, 255, 324
Arnold, Matthew, 93
Arnold, W. T., 168–70, 312
Augustine in Kent, 192–3, 216
Augustine on Providence, 13, 191, 243
Aurelius, Marcus, 67–70

Bacon, 295, 319
Barnardo, Dr., 120
Barrie, Mrs., 253
Baxter, John, 249
Benson, Joseph, 261
Bible as a Book of Providence, 25–50, 301
Bible Society, 222
Boethius, 1, 273
Books, list of, 2, 16, 26, 52, 82, 102, 128, 150, 186, 212, 244, 260, 276, 298, 320
Booth, General, 207
Boston, Thomas, 243
Brainerd, David, 220, 224
Britain, Christianity in, 215
Browne, Sir Thomas, 158, 245
Browning, 5, 101
Bruce, Dr. A. B., 25, 54, 81, 181
Brunton, Sir Lauder, 334
Buddhism, 75
Burder, George, 228–9
Burke, 159
Butler, 211, 297, 304–5, 319

Caesars, The, 169
Carey, William, 223, 232
Carlyle, Thomas, 37, 112, 122, 315
Catechism, Methodist, 4
Catechism, Shorter, 286
Celsus, 104
Christianity, 167, 213–4
Chrysostom, 119
Church as an ally of Providence, The, 21
Church, Dean, 33, 255
Church history, Providence in, 185–210
Cicero, 66
Clarke, Dr. Newton, 111, 280
Cobden, 268
Coke, Dr., 221
Coleridge, S. T., 290
Comte, 147
Concursus, 275
Confucius, 76–7
Creation and Providence, 27–8
Creighton, Bishop, 157, 174
Criminal classes, 331–3
Cromer, Earl, 72, 148
Cromwell, 23, 117, 269

Cumming, Dr. Elder, 30
Cuthbert, 252

Dante, 147
Darwin, 104–5, 109, 130–3, 307
D'Auguesseau, 149
Death, 290
Diggle, Bishop, 292
Dorner, 51, 259, 275
Doughty's *Arabia*, 51
Dryden, 101

East India Company and missions, 230–2
Egyptian view, 55
Eliot, George, 287
Embury, Philip, 250
Emerson, 262, 271, 275
England and her vocation, 172–4
English Christianity, Making of, 192–6
Epictetus, 67
Epicureans, 63–4
Erasmus, 201–2, 218
Euripides, 62
Evangelical Revival, 203, 221, 223
Experience as a Book of Providence, 243–58

Fanaticism, 282
Fiske, Prof., 127, 147
Flavel, 1, 101, 256, 259, 261, 295
Fletcher, John, 252
Flower, Sir W., 133
Food stores of the earth, 137
Francis of Assisi, 197
Free will, 109–113

Gibson, Bishop, on Job, 39
Gladstone, Mr., 117, 162, 287, 311
God of Providence, 81–100
Grant, Charles, 230
Greece, Vocation of, 162–5, 190
Green, T. H., 211
Greg, 89
Grey, Sir G., 124
Guizot, 317
Gwatkin, Prof., 11, 81, 110, 133, 149

Haeckel, 104
Hannington, Bishop, 33, 35
Harvard, John, 253
Heck, Barbara, 250
Hegel, 8, 152–4, 297
Henry, Matthew, 243
Heraclitus, 58
Herbert, George, 327
Herodotus, 62
Herschel, Sir J., 145–6
Hesiod, 56
Hill, David, 239
Hinton, James, 92
Hohenlohe, Prince, 90, 113
Hole, Dean, 24
Homer, 51, 56–7
Homes and Providence, 21
Hooker, 185
Horne, Melville, 225–8
Hughes, H. P., 333
Human Providence, 10, 15–24, 114, 319–41
Humboldt, 34
Hume, 136
Hutton, R. H., 318
Huxley, 28
Hymns on Providence, 50

Illingworth, Dr., 73, 105
Immanence of God, 86
India, 235
Indian religions, 73–5, 240
In Memoriam, 45
Ireland, 215–7
Isaiah, The fortieth of, 45, 91, 94
Israel, History of, 31, 159–62

Jacob, 29, 247
Japan, 232–5
Jefferies, Richard, 138
Jerome, 192
Jews, The, 160–2
Job, Book of, 37–45
Johnson, Captain Edward, 253
Joseph, 29, 248
Justin Martyr, 214

Kempis, 325
Kingsley, Charles, 35, 127, 154, 243, 336–7, 340
Kipling, Rudyard, 81

Lankester, Dr. Ray, 106, 107–8, 129, 335
Laws, General, 277
Leibnitz, 9, 149
Leighton, Archbishop, 4
Leo the Great, 165
Lessing, 152
Life, Providence in human, 245
Lister, Lord, 120
Lives, Providence in Bible, 28–31, 247–8
Lodge, Sir O., *Catechism*, 21
Longfellow, 127
Lower races, 175–7, 236
Lucretius, 141
Lull, Raymund, 217
Luther, 50, 119, 123, 179, 199–203

Macaulay, Lord, 95
Macdonald, F. W., 263
Macdonald, George, 127
Macdonald, James, 243
Macgregor, 'Rob Roy,' 269
Man an instrument of Providence, 22, 327
Man of Providence, 101–26, 267
Manning, Cardinal, 303
Maurice, 325
M'Cosh, Dr., 266, 272, 279
Medicine and surgery, 333–5
Methodism a providential mosaic, 204–5
Methodist itinerancy, 226
Methodist Magazine, 261–3
Mexico, 78–9
Mill, J. S., 15, 141–5, 311, 321, 323
Milton on Providence, 5, 243
Missionary Societies, English, 222
Missions a school of heroism, 237
Missions, Providence in, 211–42
Mivart, Dr., 144
Mohammed, 51, 71–3
Mohammedanism, 71, 196–7
Moravians, 219
Morgan, William, 314
Mysteries, Providential, 4–6, 11
Mystics, Practical, 118

Nations, Providence in the life of, 22, 53, 149–84, 327–9
Nations, Small, 172
Nature a book of Providence, 127–48
Nature's methods, 142–6
Nelson, 115
New Testament teaching, 46–49
Newman, J. H., 24, 203, 245–9, 254, 264, 297
Nile, The, 147

Occasionalism, 266
Oehler, Prof., 28, 31, 38
Old Testament teaching, 27–46, 151
Omnipotence of God, 88–9, 309–11
Origen, 104
Orr, Dr., 289

Paton, John G., 269
Patrick, St., 215
Paul, St., 53–4, 119, 121, 130, 151, 179, 187–8, 305
Paulinus, 195
Payson, E., 312
Peru, 78–9
Pessimism, 250
Philip II of Spain, 114, 268
Pitt, W. (Earl Chatham), 149
Plato, 60–1, 127
Pope, Alexander, 271, 297, 319
Pope, Dr. W. B., 8
Powell, York, 159, 312
Prayer, 293
Providence and its critics, 297–319
Providence, Belief in, 3, 12
Providence, Designs of, 12, 182–4
Providence, Divine, 1–14
Providence, Special, 279
Providence, The word, 7
Providential men, 119, 120, 190–1, 207
Providential methods, 275–296
Psalms, Providence in the, 32–7, 103, 252
Puritan missions, 219

Quinet, Edgar, 101

Races, Relation between various, 177–80
Raleigh, Sir W., 154–6
Ramsay, Prof., 187
Ranke, 158
Reformation and missions, The, 218
Religions, Comparative, 53
Renaissance, The, 171
Rheims New Testament, 8
Robinson, Dean, 106
Rome, 70; instrument of Providence, 165–7, 168–70, 191–2
Rosebery, Lord, 117
Ruskin, 15, 341

Sacrifice, Progress by, 97, 121
Sanday, Dr., 289, 294
Saxon beliefs, 78
Schopenhauer, 250
Schubert, Prof. von, 241
Science and Providence, 135
Scott, Sir Walter, 15, 101
Selborne, Earl, 287
Seneca, 65
Sermon on the Mount, 19, 46–8, 96, 129, 279
Shaftesbury, Earl, 115, 252
Shute, Richard, 291
Socrates, 59
Sophocles, 61
Southey, 178
Stephen, Sir J., 10, 285
Stephen, Sir Leslie, 313
Stephenson, Dr., 120
Steward, George, 25, 165, 179, 183, 185, 211, 214
Stoics, The, 64–70
Strabo, 147
Stubbs, Bishop, 185
Suffering, Problem of, 141–8, 306–13

Tarsus, 187–8
Taylor, Isaac, 32, 258, 282–6
Tennyson, 94, 140, 302–3, 319
Terry, Dr., 300
Teutonic races, 167
Theodoret, 126, 134
Trent, Council of, 203

Victoria, Queen, 85, 116
Voltaire, 301

Wallace, A. R., 144, 321–3, 333, 339
Washington, 174
Water, 138
Wesley, Charles, 23, 25, 50, 205
Wesley and Providence, 4, 79, 99, 119, 197, 205–6, 251–2, 268, 271, 314
Wesley, Susanna, 204, 220
Whitefield, George, 205
Wilberforce, 115, 231
William the Silent, 85, 268
Wisdom of Solomon, 7
Wordsworth, 77
Wyclif, 198

Xavier, 218
Xenophanes, 58, 92

York, 14, 195–6, 239

Ziegenbalg, 220
Zinzendorf, 219–220
Zoroaster, 56

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